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A method of studying the responses of adolescents to literature was devised and utilized in analyzing the reactions of 52 ninth- and 10th-grade students to four short stories. Each story was divided into six sections and the students' verbal responses were recorded after reading each section. The resulting data indicated that, of the seven response categories, students gave more interpretational reactions than summaries or responses involving literary judgment, self-involvement, personal associations, or prescriptive judgments. Although individual interpretations were generally unrelated to intelligence or reading ability and response patterns were highly individualized, a correspondence was noted between socioeconomic status and response patterns, and a strong positive relationship was found between responses of literary judgment and those of self-involvement. Six sources of difficulty in literary interpretation were identified: failure to grasp the meaning, irrelevant associations, reliance on stock responses, "happiness binding," critical predispositions, and a search for certainty. The information and techniques of this project can be applied to further research and to methods of teaching to correct revealed weaknesses. (The stories selected were "All the Years of Her Life" by Morley Callaghan, "Prelude" by Lucile Vaughan Payne, "Reverdy" by Jessamyn West, and "The Man in the Shadow" by Richard Washburn Child.) (LH)

* no. 2 in a series of research reports sponsored by the NCTE Committee on Research

The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories

National Council of Teachers of English 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois

THIS STUDY

. . . develops a method for studying the responses of individuals to literature. (See pp. 9 to 19.)

. . . reports that responses to literature coded as interpretational occur more frequently than narrational responses, literary judgments, responses indicating self-involvement, associational responses, and prescriptive judgments. (See pp. 20 to 21.)

. . . reports a strong positive relationship between responses coded as literary judgment and those which indicate self-involvement. (See p. 22.)

. . . reports a relationship between socioeconomic status and response patterns which may reflect the experiential background of readers. (See p. 25.)

. . . investigates the relationship of response to literature and personal predispositions and indicates the complexity and highly individual nature of response patterns. (See pp. 25 to 27 and, also, the summary of statistical analysis on pp. 35 to 36.)

. . . identifies six sources of difficulty in literary interpretation which create problems for adolescents in reading fiction: failure to grasp the meaning, reliance on stock responses, happiness binding, critical predispositions, irrelevant associations, the search for certainty. (See pp. 37 to 49.)

National Council of Teachers of English

Research Report No. 2

The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories

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THE RESPONSES OF ADOLESCENTS WHILE READING FOUR SHORT STORIES

by

JAMES R. SQUIRE

NCTE Research Report No. 2

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois

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PREFACE

National Council of Teachers of English

Research Report No. 2

continues a new series of publications by the Council, inaugurated with *The Language of Elementary School Children* by Walter D. Loban, designed to bring to the profession comprehensive reports of recent research significant to the teaching of English. This report, prepared by James R. Squire, is important to the profession because it illuminates one of the most complex problems in the teaching of English, the ways in which students comprehend literature while they read.

English teachers have been attempting for generations to inculcate in their students an understanding of and love for literature. The attempts have been guided primarily by considered judgment based upon the study of such widely divergent aspects of the total process as the frequency and complexity of the use of specific words, the readability of various sentence structures, the universality of basic themes, and the meaning of meaning itself.

Educational research in general and research in the teaching of English in particular are most plentiful in those areas which are easily quantifiable. When, however, we attempt to measure comprehension, we seem forced to simplify the content of the material to be read so that we probably fail to get a measure of the individual's capacity to comprehend fully all that the author envisioned. So repeatedly do we tend to test only comprehension of details that many a student's foreknowledge of our emphasis may well limit his capacity to comprehend the larger implications of literature. This tendency to overemphasize testable minutiae is perhaps one reason why research does not yet indicate the ways in which an individual grows in his ability to interpret literature. Thus the teacher of English often gets little direct help from research in learning how to teach his students to become skilled readers and knowledgeable consumers of their literary heritage.

Dr. Squire's study demonstrates a refreshingly different approach to the problems of research. He has pioneered a technique of studying comprehension as it takes place, and he has developed a technique

of classifying responses which may be broad enough to be useful in similar studies of widely differing types of literature. The research design is suitable for wide replication. The author's conclusions and statements are models of cautious optimism.

Research Report No. 1 was concerned with the language development of American students. Appropriately, Research Report No. 2 adds to the knowledge of the impact of literature on individuals and also presents a means of developing research methods which will be useful in future studies of response to literature.

For the Committee on Research
DORIS GUNDERSON
Associate Chairman

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer gratefully acknowledges the aid and assistance of many individuals without whose cooperation and support neither the original study nor this report would have been completed.

Penetrating suggestions concerning the design of the study were made by Professor Henry C. Meckel of San Jose State College; Professor Hilda Taba of San Francisco State College; and Professors Mary Cover Jones, Theodore Sarbin, and William A. Brownell of the University of California, Berkeley.

A number of teachers and professional colleagues assisted in one or more phases of the research. Of these, John Donovan, Norman Naas, Theodore Swift, Aileen Poole, Robert E. Brownlee, George Bliss, and Grace Maertins were particularly helpful in assisting with data collection in the field.

Professor Harrison Gough of the University of California generously permitted use of the California Psychological Inventory.

Miss Margaret Ryan, generous in her time and enthusiasm for the research, served as check-coder for the content analysis. Professor David H. Russell offered encouraging advice during the study itself and during the preparation of the manuscript. Professor Walter Loban, also of the University of California, Berkeley, gave extensively of himself in guiding the study from its initial inception. His patience, perceptiveness, and personal example were a source of continual reassurance.

Professor Louise Rosenblatt of New York University and Professor Margaret Early of Syracuse University read the manuscript and offered many valuable suggestions. For their advice, for the criticism from the Committee on Publications, and for the editing of Mrs. Enid Olson, NCTE Director of Publications, the author is grateful indeed.

Above all, to Barbara L. Squire, wife of the writer, is due appreciation for her patient and understanding encouragement and for welcome assistance during many phases of this research.

JAMES R. SQUIRE
Urbana, Illinois
September 1963

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Introduction

What happens to readers while they read and respond to a short story? What do they think, feel, or react to at any moment? Studies of response to literature have dealt with reactions obtained at the end of reading–after a story or poem is completed. But reader reactions obtained after a selection is read may conceal as much as they reveal. Final reactions can indicate what students think and feel about a literary selection, but not always how the students came to think and feel in a particular way. And unless teachers develop a greater understanding about how literary interpretations develop, they will continue to be handicapped in trying to help students refine their skills of literary analysis. For the teacher of English, the study of literature must involve not only consideration of the literary work itself but also concern for the way in which students respond to a literary work.

Throughout the history of criticism, literary critics have concerned themselves with the impact of literature on the reader. Aristotle's theory of catharsis emanated from his observations of the impact of the experience of tragedy on human sensibilities. During recent years, such students of literature as I. A. Richards, Louise Rosenblatt, and Thomas Clark Pollock have addressed themselves to a careful consideration of the responses of readers.[1] During the past two decades, also, a small but increasing number of studies in the teaching of English have been conducted in this field.

The present study of response to literature is based on the reactions of 52 ninth and tenth grade students while reading four selected short stories. The study has four dimensions:

a. It seeks to provide an overall description of the responses of these students to the four stories.
b. It seeks to describe the ways in which these responses develop during the reading of a short story.

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[1]I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study in Literary Judgment* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1930); Louise Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938); Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Nature of Literature; Its Relation to Science, Language, and Human Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942).

c. It seeks to relate these responses to the intelligence, socio-economic backgrounds, reading abilities, and other personal characteristics of the readers.
d. It seeks to analyze the factors which limit and constrict the responses of these readers and thus create barriers to sound interpretations of literature.

Although the basic purpose of the study is to extend present knowledge concerning the impact of literature on individuals, the study also illustrates a method of research which may prove useful in suggesting procedures for developing designs for subsequent studies of response to literature.

I. Studies of Response to Literature

Educational research on the response to literature has recently been summarized by Russell[2] and by Smith.[3] Studies in literary scholarship pertaining to the impact of literature on individuals have been reviewed by Grey.[4] Although differing in their selection and treatment of studies, the reviewers agree that present knowledge about response to literature tends to be fragmentary and to some extent intuitive. As Stanley Edgar Hyman has observed, concern about the reader's relationship to the literary work has usually focused on generalized commentaries on the role of the audience in the communication process, rather than on the study of specific reactions to specific works.[5]

One area of research has been investigation into the aesthetic factors involved in appreciation of literature. Downey, in an early psychological discussion, concerned herself with the psychological doctrine of identification and presented three classifications of responders: the *Ecstatic,* whose self-consciousness is merged with the experience that he is enjoying; the *Participator,* who assumes one personality after another in the story with varying degrees of success; and the *Spectator,* who remains detached and enjoys and evaluates the literary scene as an observer.[6] Although modern psychologists tend to reject a hypothesis that divides persons into distinct types, Downey feels that both the content of literature and literary genre determine the nature of responses.

Some use of factor analysis has been made to increase understanding of "interpretation" and "appreciation." In Britain, Williams, Winter, and Woods applied five tests of appreciation to more than 200 children and adolescents and discovered that a general factor, which

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[2]David H. Russell, "Some Research on the Impact of Reading," *English Journal,* 47 (October, 1958), 398-413.

[3]Nila B. Smith (ed.), *Developing Taste in Literature* (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1963).

[4]Lennox Grey, "The Literary Audience," in Lewis Leary (ed.), *Contemporary Literary Scholarship* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958), pp. 403-461.

[5]Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Armed Vision* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 279.

[6]June Downey, *Creative Imagination: Studies in the Psychology of Literature* (London; Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company, 1929).

they called literary appreciation, correlated with intelligence and accounted for 50 percent of the variation in responses, whereas a second bipolar factor, accounting for 20 percent of the variance, separated readers preferring the objective, form-conscious styles of the classicists from those who preferred the subjective approaches of the romantic school of writers.[7] Similar findings were reported by Gunn in a study of 100 high school and university students. Gunn's general aesthetic factor was associated with such factors as Liking, Emotional Effect, Mode of Expression, Appeal of the Subject. The bipolar factor in his study distinguished readers who were concerned with Rhyme, Word Music, and Rhythm, from those responding to Emotional Effect, Appeal of the Subject, Comprehension, and Mental Imagery. Gunn's study also agreed with the earlier finding that the influence of subject matter on appreciation decreases with the age of the reader.[8]

In an attempt to develop a group test of appreciation, Forman found free responses more helpful than responses elicited by specific questions. He constructed separate scales—an Elaboration of Details scale to measure visualization, a Continuity and Purpose scale to indicate comprehension of meaning and sequence in narrative, and a Character Vitalization scale to measure responses to literary figures; then he found such a high degree of correlation between the scales that he concluded that they measured a general appreciative factor rather than separate factors.[9] His results thus tended to confirm those studies which found some general factor influencing appreciation.

Analyses of the misinterpretations of readers have offered another promising approach to the study of response to literature. Most influential has been the work of I. A. Richards, who analyzed the written transcripts of advanced Cambridge undergraduates to thirteen poems of unknown authorship. His method was characterized by rational study and classification, rather than by scientific control and statistical methods, but his discovery that the majority of subjects found the poems to be difficult, obscure, and unmanageable had a

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[7]E. D. Williams, L. Winter, and J. M. Woods, "Tests of Literary Appreciation," *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 8 (November, 1938), 265-284.

[8]Douglas G. Gunn, "Factors in the Appreciation of Poetry," *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 21 (June, 1951), 96-104.

[9]Earl Forman, *An Instrument to Evaluate the Literary Appreciation of Adolescents* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, 1951. Publication 3137, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan).

profound influence on subsequent college teaching. Richards reported seven sources of difficulty in the reader's responses to poetry:

1. Inability to grasp the author's meaning at one or more levels of comprehension (sense, feeling, tone, intention).
2. Misunderstanding of the imagery.
3. Inadequate sensuous apprehension of the form and movement of the poem.
4. The misleading effect of erratic associations and stereotyped responses.
5. Distortion through sentimental or inhibited responses.
6. Confusions created by the doctrinal predispositions of the reader, especially when the reader's beliefs conflict with those presented in the poem.
7. The effect of general critical preconception and technical prejudgments.[10]

Additional insight into the causes of misinterpretation have been offered by Cross, who analyzed the written reactions of junior college students to short selections obtained before the meanings of the selections were clarified. He reported four sources of difficulty: too literal a reading of the printed word, confusions in the meanings of words, and erratic associations caused either by the influence of home and family or by the influence of personal experiences.[11]

Many studies have focused on the relationship of reading responses to personality predispositions. These have been summarized by Russell.[12] Using a clinical approach, Shrodes observed that individuals tend to respond selectively to literature in terms of their own needs.[13] Other studies revealing the influence of personality

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[10]I. A. Richards, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-305.

[11]Neal M. Cross, "The Background for Misunderstanding," *English Journal*, XXIX (May, 1940), 366-370.

[12]David H. Russell, "Some Research on the Impact of Reading," *English Journal*, XLVII (October, 1958), 398-413.

[13]Caroline Shrodes, *Bibliotherapy: A Theoretical and Clinical-Experimental Study* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1949).

factors have also been reported by Foulds,[14] Stewart,[15] Kay,[16] McCaul,[17] Crossen,[18] and McKillop.[19]

Meckel's study of the responses of 96 seniors to Hugh Walpole's novel *Fortitude* revealed the importance of sex differences as well as the impact of content factors in influencing reading responses. Meckel found that unfavorable comments on the novel stemmed more from ideas in the literary selection than from reactions to such technical matters as form and style. He reported that readers who rejected the Walpole novel were often influenced by "personal-psychological" factors. However, he emphasized individual variation in responses.[20]

Loban reported that students with high ratings on sympathetic understanding of other people responded differently to ten stories intended to evoke sympathy in the reader than did those who were less sensitive. He found that the less sensitive readers displayed a pronounced tendency to blame or condemn characters without attempting to understand motivations. He also observed that most reactions of adolescents to literature were obvious, superficial, or unrealistic.[21]

In an eighth grade classroom of 25 adolescents, Taba used informal research methods to classify the discussions of books and stories. She found that student responses could be coded into four classifications: Projections or attempts to understand, evaluate, and explain behavior; Generalizations involving the distillation of facts

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[14]Graham Foulds, "The Child's Response to Fictional Characters and Its Relationship to Personality Traits," *Character and Personality,* 11 (September, 1942), 64-75.

[15]Naomi Shiller Stewart, "Attitudes toward Literary Characters as Related to Factors in Personality" (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, Lafayette, 1944).

[16]Herbert Kay, "Toward an Understanding of News-Reading Behavior," *Journalism Quarterly,* 31 (Winter, 1954), 15-32, 94.

[17]Robert McCaul, "The Effect of Attitudes upon Reading Interpretations," *Journal of Educational Research,* 37 (February, 1944), 451-457.

[18]Helen J. Crossen, "Effects of Attitudes of the Reader upon Critical Reading Ability" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1946).

[19]Anne Silley McKillop, *The Relationship between the Reader's Attitude and Certain Types of Reading Responses* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1952).

[20]Henry Christian Meckel, "An Exploratory Study of the Responses of Adolescent Pupils to Situations in a Novel" (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1946).

[21]Walter Loban, *Literature and Social Sensitivity* (Champaign: National Council of Teachers of English, 1954).

into general principles governing behavior; Self-references; and Irrelevancies. Of these, Projection was the dominant response in class discussion and accounted for from 50.9 to 87.2 percent of the statements made by individuals. Taba felt that her study indicated four types of responders: persons who enter a story fully and freely without generalizing or connecting it with previous experience, egocentric readers who find meaning in a story only through its association with their own experience, egocentric readers who advise story characters on how to behave, and readers who project or generalize and are subjected to new experience.[22]

In research concluded subsequently to the study reported in this monograph, Wilson analyzed the responses of college students written before and after class discussion. He reports a decrease in the number of literary judgments and self-involvement responses as a result of class discussion and an increase in interpretational reactions. The reactions varied slightly with the novels, suggesting the importance of substantive factors, but the evidence indicated that the dimensions of response to literature are changed by class discussion. Perhaps because he was working with more sophisticated students, Wilson's analysis of the written transcripts[23] did not reveal extensive misinterpretations similar to those reported by Cross, Loban, Richards, and the study described here.

Earlier studies of responses to literature have been based almost entirely on written responses obtained *after* the reading of the selection is concluded. These studies reveal the operation of a general factor influencing appreciation, the importance of sex differences, and the impact of personal predispositions. Intelligence and reading ability are uncertain influences. Studies indicate that readers differ in their ability to identify with characters, and that although group tendencies may be revealed, much individual variation is to be expected.

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[22]Hilda Taba, *With Perspective on Human Relations:* A Study of Peer Dynamics in an Eighth Grade (Washington: American Council on Education, 1955).

[23]James R. Wilson, "Responses of College Freshmen to Three Novels" (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1962).

ALL THE YEARS OF HER LIFE*

by

Morley Callaghan

DIVISION 1:

As Alfred Higgins leaves work at the drugstore, the proprietor, Sam Carr, asks him to remove a compact, a lipstick, and two tubes of toothpaste from his pocket. When Alfred claims that this is his first theft, Carr replies that the boy has "been doing this pretty steady." Alfred begins to feel "a familiar terror." Carr considers calling the police directly but ultimately calls Alfred's mother despite the boy's half-hearted objections.

DIVISION 2:

Alfred believes that his mother will appear full of anger and contempt, but he longs for her to arrive before Mr. Carr sees a policeman. Mrs. Higgins appears with calmness and dignity and surprises even Mr. Carr with her lack of terror.

DIVISION 3:

Mrs. Higgins talks calmly to Mr. Carr and suggests that what the boy needs is a little good advice. Alfred is certain that she would be enraged at home and cannot understand her quiet manner.

DIVISION 4:

Mr. Carr at length agrees to limit punishment to the loss of the job. The two adults part with expressions of mutual respect. The mother and son walk home quietly together.

DIVISION 5:

Anxious to break the silence, Alfred mutters that he is relieved. Mrs. Higgins bitterly assails him and insists that he be quiet. Upon arrival at home she avoids looking at him, calls him "a bad lot," and sends him to his room. She cautions him against speaking of the event to his father.

DIVISION 6:

Alfred finally leaves his room to express his appreciation to his mother. He finds her frightened, trembling, and devoid of assurance. He remembers that she reacted in this manner to his earlier troubles, and it seems to him "that this is the first time he had ever looked on his mother." At this moment his youth seems to be over.

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*Originally published in *The New Yorker*, 11 (June 8, 1935), 17-19. Reprinted in *Short Stories from the New Yorker* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943).

II. The Design of the Study

The study reported here explored the responses of ninth and tenth grade students while reading four short stories.[24] The stories were divided into segments for analysis by individuals in an interview. Each interview lasted from thirty to eighty minutes, the precise duration varying with the length of each story and the verbosity of the reader. Individual responses to each segment were recorded on disc, and a method of coding and analysis was devised which yielded a picture of the development of each adolescent's responses during the complete process of reading a story. Then, with definite categories of responses identified, response patterns were examined in relation to such characteristics of the readers as sex, intelligence, reading ability, socioeconomic status, and certain personality predispositions. The transcripts themselves were subjected to an internal analysis designed to reveal sources of difficulty in adolescent responses to fiction.

The Selection of Stories

Three considerations governed the selection of the four stories: quality as literature for reading by adolescents in the ninth grade; relation to certain key experiences of adolescents; and lack of familiarity, level of complexity, and capacity for eliciting a variety of responses as determined by analysis and tryout with students who were not participants in the study.

The stories selected were "All the Years of Her Life" by Morley Callaghan; "Prelude" by Lucile Vaughan Payne; "Reverdy" by Jessamyn West; and "The Man in the Shadow" by Richard Washburn Child. Summaries of these stories appear on pages 8, 10, 12, and 14. In the judgment of the investigator and of two other specialists on the teaching of high school English, three of the four stories met reasonable standards of artistic excellence. The one which did not, "The Man in the Shadow," contrived in situation and obvious in

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[24]The study reported here is based primarily on a Ph.D. dissertation completed at the University of California, Berkeley. For the complete report, see James R. Squire, *The Responses of Adolescents to Literature Involving Selected Experiences in Personal Development* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1956).

PRELUDE*
by
Lucile Vaughan Payne

DIVISION 1:
Nancy Hollister hopes to be nominated by her high school sorority as a candidate for prom queen. She misses the sorority meeting, however, when she remains at school listening to a student custodian play the piano. She has never known anyone like this shabbily dressed Stephen Karoladis, who is working his way through school.

DIVISION 2:
Nancy's parents like Stephen but worry for fear the sorority crowd will not accept him. At a soda fountain, sorority friends tell Nancy that she has been nominated. They then laugh at Stephen and embarrass Nancy so that she cannot feel elated at the news of her nomination.

DIVISION 3:
Nancy defends Stephen against the taunts, and she continues to see him. Nancy and Stephen visit remote Hungarian restaurants and spend a delightful afternoon with his father.

DIVISION 4:
Stephen accidentally overhears some girls teasing Nancy by suggesting that he will be her date for the prom. He refuses when Nancy first asks him but agrees when he realizes that he can rent a tuxedo. Nancy is sure he will impress the girls when he is dressed.

DIVISION 5:
Nancy is elected queen of the prom. When Stephen arrives without a corsage and in an ill-fitting tuxedo, Nancy returns to her room. She feels that she can't face the derision of her friends as she leads the grand march with him. Her mother tells her that she must make her own decision.

DIVISION 6:
Nancy considers going to the prom alone and claiming that her date has been in an accident. Downstairs Stephen begins to play a Hungarian tune on the piano. The music suggests to Nancy the answer. If she sends Stephen away, she will accept the safe, comfortable pattern of correctness. Believing that she is choosing a way of life, she decides to go with Stephen.

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*Originally published in *Seventeen*, 1947. Reprinted in A. H. Lass and Arnold Horowitz (eds.), *Stories for Youth* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950).

development, was included in part to test the reader's perception of form and style. The content of the four dealt with three experiences of major concern to youthful readers—finding one's role in the peer group, developing personal independence, and developing a philosophy of life. Special characteristics which seemed to be capable of affecting responses were also considered in selecting the stories, such as the number of characters of both sexes, the point of view from which the story was written, and a lack of editorial comment and explanation by the author sufficient to require readers to make interpretations. The readability level for each of the stories was estimated at grade five to six according to the Dale-Chall Formula.[25] In level of difficulty the stories thus seemed to be appropriate reading even for those ninth and tenth grade students who were retarded in reading ability.

The Students

Because the design of the study required that each subject be interviewed for several hours, the number of subjects was necessarily limited. However, an attempt was made to secure equal numbers of boys and girls in a restricted age group. Twenty-seven boys and twenty-five girls were selected, their ages ranging over the eighteen-month span from 14 years, 10 months to 16 years, 2 months. They were enrolled in the ninth and tenth grade classes at an eight-week summer session which they attended for a variety of reasons, e.g., to repeat courses, to accelerate in school, to engage in special study. Although these data suggest that the group is not typical in every way, it was, nevertheless, a representative sample in three out of four important bases of selection. Tests given to 80 percent of the group—those available for special testing—indicate the nature of the group. Data are presented in Table I and Table II. In reading ability as measured by the Survey Section of the Diagnostic Reading Tests,[26] the distribution and central tendency of the scores for these subjects are almost identical to the scores reported for students in Grade Ten—

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[25]Edgar Dale and Jeanne A. Chall, "A Formula for Predicting Readability," *Educational Research Bulletin* (The Ohio State University, Columbus), 27 (January 21, 1948), 11-20, 28; and 27 (February 18, 1948), 37-54.

[26]Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests, *Diagnostic Reading Test, Survey Section* (Form B) (New York: Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests, 418 West 119th St., 1950).

REVERDY*

by

Jessamyn West

DIVISION 1:
Although I seldom mention my sister Reverdy, I think of her constantly. I long to tell her about the night when she left. Liked by both boys and girls, she was completely different from me. Mother was sometimes cruel to her and thought unjustly that she was boy crazy.

DIVISION 2:
Plain and homely myself, I was proud to have a pretty and popular sister. Sometimes when my mother would warn her about girls who got in trouble, Reverdy would leave the house in anger and would walk alone in the foothills. Mother would think that she was out with boys again.

DIVISION 3:
Once Mother made me creep into the arbor to spy on Reverdy and a boy friend. They were only practicing sign language with my brother. I could not face Reverdy at dinner so I went for a swim.

DIVISION 4:
Returning from school one evening, I found Reverdy walking up and down the driveway in a windstorm. Mother was punishing her and wouldn't let me speak to Reverdy. Then Mother called me her comfort, her girl who never caused any trouble.

DIVISION 5:
I enjoyed being appreciated by Mother and decided to encourage her affection at Reverdy's expense. While Mother was sending Father out to scold Reverdy, I asked my brother to join in playing a musical selection to comfort Mother. Over and over we played the selection so that Mother wouldn't be too disturbed by the "bad Reverdy."

DIVISION 6:
I was awakened that night by Reverdy who thanked me for playing music which told her not to be sad. She had picked some asters for me. I wanted to tell her that I was playing for Mother, but I couldn't. I decided to tell her in the morning. But in the morning Reverdy was gone.

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*Originally published in *The New Mexico Quarterly Review*, 13 (Spring, 1943), 21-27.

Public Schools. On Primary Mental Abilities—Intermediate Form,[27] quotients of these students are slightly above the quoted norms. As a group, their personality predispositions, as measured by the 18 standard scales of the 1951 edition of Gough's California Psychological Inventory,[28] corresponded closely to the printed high school norms for 3,572 males and 4,050 females. Only in socioeconomic status, as measured by the Minnesota Scale for Paternal Occupations,[29] did data on the group appear markedly skewed, with a preponderance of subjects reporting their fathers occupied in professional, business, and skilled occupations. However, 17 students reported paternal occupations classifiable as semiskilled or slightly skilled, thus providing for comparative purposes a low socioeconomic group sufficiently large for the purposes of this research.

TABLE I

Subjects' Scores on the Diagnostic Reading Test, Survey Section, with Tenth Grade Norms

Statistical Measure	*Subjects (N = 42)*	*Norms: Grade 10—Public Schools*[a]
Mean	58	not given
Median	57.5	58
Q_1	47.1	48
Q_3	70.8	69

[a]Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests, "Directions for Administering Survey Section (Form B)" (New York: Committee on Diagnostic Reading Tests, 1950).

In addition to the other tests, a special measure was designed to distinguish attitudes of these adolescents toward materialistic values and toward security and affection in their homes. Such attitudes seemed to be potentially important in predisposing readers to react in certain ways to experiences in the four stories; however, established devices were not available for measurement. Therefore,

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[27]L. L. Thurstone and T. G. Thurstone, *Primary Mental Abilities—Intermediate* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1949).

[28]Harrison E. Gough, "A Preliminary Guide for the Use and Interpretation of the California Psychological Inventory" (Berkeley: Institute of Personality Assessment and Research, University of California, 1954). (Mimeographed.)

[29]The Minnesota Scale for Paternal Occupations (Minneapolis: Institute of Child Welfare, University of Minnesota, n.d.).

THE MAN IN THE SHADOW*

by

Richard Washburn Child

DIVISION 1:
Carter Clews recognizes four former classmates who are stepping into a car. Wealthy and successful men, they drive off without recognizing him. Clews feels that he belongs to them no longer.

DIVISION 2:
Awaiting Clews at home is an invitation to the 25th reunion of his class which will be held that evening. He remembers his senior dinner when he sat under an apple tree with five classmates. They pledged to jump into the river if they weren't successful by 40. His wife and daughter urge him to go to the dinner.

DIVISION 3:
No one recognizes Clews at the banquet. He sits alone in a corner and decides never to suffer such an experience again.

DIVISION 4:
The Toastmaster asks the class to drink to a man who is not present. He recalls five of the men who made the pledge. He says that the sixth—honorable, smartest, and goodhearted—is not present. Clews gulps hard.

DIVISION 5:
The Toastmaster explains how the sixth man spent his life paying off his father's debts and caring for a large family. He feels that even though the man had avoided the limelight he has been clean and honest and successful. He asks the audience to toast the missing man. Clews is late in rising to the toast and is recognized. His class then cheers for him.

DIVISION 6:
Later that evening some older men are seen under the tree where the original pledge was made. Still later Clews brings home his college roommate, the governor of the state.

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*Originally published in *Harper's*, 113 (June, 1906), 110-116.

an instrument was developed which required each adolescent to sort according to his own attitudes a series of positive and negative statements about family relationships and about materialism. This instrument was designed to discriminate groups of individuals with high and low scores in each area. Those with high scores were the individuals who most consistently agreed with the positive statements and who rejected the negative statements.

TABLE II
Distribution of Intelligence Quotients of Subjects on Primary Mental Abilities (Intermediate) (N = 43)

Statistical Measure	*Quotient*
Mean	105
+1 Sd.	123
−1 Sd.	90
Q_1	96
Q_3	118

For more intensive case studies 13 students were selected by random sampling of the 52. Detailed information on these subjects was obtained through school counselors, conferences with teachers and with individuals, and from a trained classroom observer who maintained a running anecdotal record of the behavior and comments of each student during his English class. These case studies were conducted to assist in interpreting the data secured on the entire group and to illuminate the uniqueness of the individual responses.

The Responses

The following procedures were developed for the purpose of obtaining data on the students' responses while reading short stories:

1. To obtain the responses of readers at different moments during the complete process of responding, the investigator divided each of the four stories into six carefully predetermined divisions.
2. In general, the first division of each story presented the exposition of the story and included an incomplete presentation of both the characters and the problem, with subsequent segments presenting the development of the action as unfolded by the author.

3. The fifth break for each story occurred near the moment of climax, with the final segment presenting the dénouement.
4. The reading and recording for each story took place at one sitting in an interview situation.
5. The oral responses of the reader immediately after reading the division were recorded on a disc cutter.
6. By recording the verbal responses of individuals immediately after reading each of the five segments, as well as at the end of reading the complete story, evidence was obtained to suggest the development of responses of readers during the total process of reading a literary selection.

This method assumed, of course, that the flow of reactions to the separate segments approximated the flow of responses which would occur were the readings uninterrupted. Inasmuch as earlier studies had been based almost entirely on the analysis of responses written after the reading of a selection had been completed, the method used in the present study was an attempt to record the thought processes of readers during the complete act of responding to a story. Interviewing procedures carefully followed established practice for nondirective interviewing, the subjects being asked to respond freely and completely in describing the "feelings, ideas, opinions, or reactions" which occurred to them while reading or at the end of reading each story.[30] The interviewer encouraged each respondent to continue speaking by indicating his interest through such devices as nodding his head or consciously attempting to listen intently. His comments tended to be limited to the nonexpressive "Oh" or "I see," or to such nondirective questions as "Do you have any other reactions or feelings or ideas?" The responses thus were each individual's oral reconstruction of his own internal emotional and intellectual reactions recorded immediately after the reading, in a situation relatively free from external pressure and the restraint of reproducing ideas in writing.

Achieving a reliable, systematic, quantitative description of reading responses was a major goal of the study. Using tested methods of

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[30]Cf. Charles F. Connell and Robert L. Kahn, "The Collection of Data by Interviewing," in Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz (eds.), *Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1953), pp. 327-380; Marie Jaheda, Morton Deutsch, and Stewart Cook, *Research Methods in Social Relations, Part I* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1951), Chap. 6.

content analysis, the investigator identified seven general categories of responses.[31] A response was defined as the smallest combination of words which conveyed the sense of a single thought. A total of 14,494 separate responses were found in the reactions of 52 subjects to the four stories.

For example, six responses occur in the following transcript as indicated by the dividing lines:

> This is not what I expected/ uh-uh-I think they are really putting on a front/ uh-I don't see why he would do that-uh-well-uh/ Maybe it's just the way mothers are. They try to keep their sons out of trouble/ I expected to find something else included and I didn't/ I-uh-wonder what's going to happen next.

The Analyses of the Responses

The following categories of responses were identified:

I. *Literary Judgments:* Direct or implied judgments on the story as an artistic work, including such generalized comments as "It's effective" or "It's good," where the statement appeared to refer to the literary or aesthetic qualities, rather than to judgment on specific situations in the story. Also, specific reactions to language, style, characterization.

II. *Interpretational Responses:* Reactions in which the reader generalizes and attempts to discover the meaning of the stories, the motivational forces, and the nature of the characters, including references to evidence from the stories marshalled to support interpretational generalizations. Three types are found: interpretations of characters or plot, interpretations of ideas and themes, visual reconstructions of scenes which seemed to represent visual interpretation of specific facts.

III. *Narrational Reactions:* Responses in which the reader reports details or facts in the story without attempting to interpret. This factual retelling may occur when the reader has difficulty in comprehending.

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[31]The procedures were recommended by Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1952); "A Manual for Coders," Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, February, 1952 (Mimeographed.); and others.

IV. *Associational Responses:* Responses in which the reader associated ideas, events, or places, and people with his own experience other than the association of a character with himself. These associations are direct, e.g., "This is like my home" or inverse, e.g., "These are not like my home."

V. *Self-involvement:* Responses in which the reader associates himself with the behavior and/or emotions of characters. These range in degree from slight to intense and may be expressed through identification or rejection.

VI. *Prescriptive Judgments:* Responses in which the reader prescribes a course of action for a character based on some absolute standard, e.g., "She ought to do this," "He must do this."

VII. *Miscellaneous:* Responses which were not coded elsewhere.

These categories were used to code all responses to the literary selections obtained from the 52 readers in the individual interviews. To indicate the reliability of the coding, an independent analyst trained by the investigator coded 29 of the 204 separate interviews. Every fourth interview of the first 50 was check-coded until it became apparent that general reliability of the process of coding in the seven categories had been established. Every tenth interview was check-coded thereafter. This method for indicating the reliability of the content analysis was based on procedures developed in several earlier studies. The following formula, used by Lewin[32] and Loban,[33] was used to estimate the degree of agreement:

$$\frac{2 \times \text{sum of agreement}}{\text{sum of checked items}}$$

Table III presents the degree of agreement in check-coding, with column one indicating the initial coefficient of agreement obtained before the investigator and check-coder had conferred. Conferences were held to discuss the definition of categories when repeated differences in the coding of items were detected. For example, a high de-

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[32]Herbert S. Lewin, "Hitler Youth and the Boy Scouts of America: A Comparison of Aims," *Human Relations,* 1 (November, 1947), 206-277.

[33]Walter Loban, "Adolescents of Varying Sensitivity and Their Responses to Literature Intended to Evoke Sympathy" (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1949).

gree of agreement on Category VI was possible only after this category had been carefully discussed by the investigator and the check-coder.

TABLE III

Degree of Agreement in Check-Coding of 29 Transcripts by Two Analysts

Category	*Coefficient of Agreement*	*Revised Coefficient (after conference)*
I. Literary Judgment	.75	.78
II. Interpretational	.72	.77
III. Narrational	.67	.73
IV. Associational	.63	.81
V. Self-involvement	.71	.79
VI. Prescriptive Judgment	.65	.97
TOTAL	.80	.83

An overall reliability of .83 was found for the method. The degree of agreement compares favorably with the results of coding of material of similar complexity, such as in the study by White.[34]

The findings of the analysis are presented here as they pertain to four major areas of concern: (1) the overall patterns of readers' responses to short stories, (2) the relationship of reading responses and personality predispositions, (3) the development of the responses during the process of reading, and (4) source of difficulty in literary interpretation revealed through a separate analysis of the transcripts.

[34]Ralph White, "Black Boy, A Value Analysis," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 42 (October, 1947), 440-461.

III. Overall Response Patterns

The percentages of responses which were coded in each of the seven categories were used as the basic response scores for statistical analysis. Certain observations emerge from the mean scores for all four stories as presented in Table IV.

TABLE IV

Mean Scores of Reading Reactions to All Four Stories

Category	*27 Boys*		*25 Girls*	
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*
I. Literary Judgment	47.7	14.8	46.7	14.9
II. Interpretational	136.7	42.6	137.6	43.9
III. Narrational	68.6	21.4	51.1	16.3
IV. Associational	11.1	3.5	7.5	2.4
V. Self-involvement	42.7	13.3	52.2	16.8
VI. Prescriptive Judgment	8.7	2.7	11.4	3.6
VII. Miscellaneous	5.3	1.7	6.8	2.1
TOTAL	320.8	100.0	313.3	100.0

More than 42 percent of all responses were coded as interpretational. Fewer than four percent were coded as associational, prescriptive judgments, or miscellaneous. These findings differ from those of Taba, who analyzed classroom discussions about literary selections by eighth graders and found factual restatements, similar to the narrational category here, to be the dominant form of response followed by explanations and analyses of behavior (interpretational), with the latter averaging 34.9 percent.[35] The difference may be attributed either to the greater maturity of the ninth and tenth graders in this study or to the difference in the data. Taba dealt with classroom reactions in a group situation. The findings also differ somewhat from those reported by Wilson, who used the same method of content analysis in studying the written response of college students to novels and found a higher percentage of interpretational

[35]Hilda Taba, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

responses and a decrease in narrational and literary judgment scores which he attributed to the greater maturity of his subjects.[36]

The fact that few responses were coded as miscellaneous indicates that the six categories tend to encompass most of the expressed reactions of these readers to the literary selections used in this study.

Only a slight positive correlation was found between the total number of responses made by students and their verbal fluency, as measured by a subscore of Primary Mental Abilities ($r = .104$). Differences in number of reactions appear largely unrelated to differences in fluency of subjects.

Sex differences in the patterns of response were tested by assuming the null hypothesis and using the χ^2 test. Only for literary judgments and self-involvement scores is the value of χ^2 sufficiently high that the null hypothesis may be rejected at the 20 percent level with the difference in favor of higher scores by the girls. For other scores no significant difference was indicated. Thus sex differences seem slight with respect to these patterns of response.

The consistency of the individual response patterns from story to story was studied by determining the interrelationship of category scores for different stories. Since the percentage scores appeared to be distributed normally for literary judgment, self-involvement reactions, and interpretational responses, Pearson product moment coefficients of correlation were computed and ranged from .32 to .77. Twenty-six of the 36 coefficients were significant at the one percent level and all but two at better than the five percent level.[37] The findings thus indicate that the percentages of responses which the 52 readers in the study made in these three categories were moderately consistent from story to story.

However, the variation in some of the coefficients indicates some individual variation, and an examination of individual transcripts suggests that this variation was often caused by unique aspects of the content of each story. In the other three categories, statistical analysis indicated little consistency from story to story. Since many readers had few or no responses coded as narrational, associational, or prescriptive judgment reactions, the relationship of these category scores from story to story was tested by assuming that no relationship existed

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[36]James Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[37]Complete data on these and other results not reproduced here in entirety are available from the writer.

and by using the χ^2 method to test the null hypothesis. In only two cases was the value of χ^2 sufficiently high for the null hypothesis to be rejected at the five percent level, and these were for narrational reactions.

The data, supported by an analysis of individual transcripts, indicate that responses coded as associational or as prescriptive judgment may occur in relation to particular characters and events in a story, whereas literary judgments, interpretational, and self-involvement reactions are the kinds of responses which tend to be part of the individuals' normal patterns of reactions while reading stories possessing the characteristics of those used in this study.

The intervariation of the category responses was measured by partial correlation technique, and the findings are presented in Table V. $r_{12.3}$ was used to correlate the intervariation of responses to different categories when the total number of responses to all categories is held constant. Employment of this technique permitted computation of the degree of intervariation without obtaining the spurious results which would necessarily occur if percentage scores, with common denominators, were correlated with each other. Yet the partial correlation method also allowed for individual variation in the total number of responses. For the most part the relationship was found to be slight.

However, a strong positive relationship exists between the number of responses coded as literary judgment and the number indicating self-involvement. This result does not lend itself to a simplified interpretation but rather suggests the complexity of the reader's response during the actual reading of a story. Literary judgments seem to be intellectually based; self-involvement, emotional in nature. Some readers who are overly concerned with artistic form and method frequently do not, it is true, involve themselves emotionally. Yet the high coefficient of correlation between literary judgment and self-involvement in this study calls into question the tendency to assume an unnecessary apposition between intellectual and emotional responses to literature. An examination of individual transcripts and of the 13 case studies suggests the following hypothesis: that readers who become strongly involved emotionally in a story tend, either while reading or more frequently at the end of reading a selection, to analyze the elements in a story which give rise to their involvement. Involved readers are more likely to make statements which

might be coded as literary judgments than are readers who are not so involved. They thus tend to be superior readers in that they open themselves to a maximum of facets, accommodate imaginatively the widest possible number of avenues to the literary experience. They respond as William Butler Yeats would have the reader respond when he wrote, "Poetry bids us touch and taste and hear and see the world, and shrink from all that is of the brain only, from all that is not a fountain jetting from the entire hopes, memories, and sensations of the body."

TABLE V

Values of $r_{12.3}$ for the Category Responses of Boys and Girls*

Where 1 = responses in a specified category
2 = responses in a second category
3 = total number of responses

CATEGORY	*II Interpretational*	*III Narrational*	*V Self-involvement*	*VI Prescriptive Judgment*
I. *Literary Judgment*				
Boys	—.042	.066	.696	.015
Girls	—.397	. . .	.599	.281
II. *Interpretational*				
Boys		.361	—.197	—.089
Girls			—.037	—.073
III. *Narrational*				
Boys			—.041	—.023
V. *Self-involvement*				
Boys				.156
Girls				.232

*The numerical distribution of responses for both sexes in Category IV (Associational) and for the girls in Category III (Narrational) are so skewed as not to admit to treatment by $r_{12.3}$.

IV. Reading Responses and Predispositions of the Reader

A comparison of the response scores with data obtained on measured characteristics and predispositions of the readers yielded the following results:

a. For the total group, the types of response scores were unrelated to reading ability, as measured by Survey Section of the Diagnostic Reading Test. Only slightly positive relationships were found, and these were not statistically significant at the five percent level. However, a comparison by *t* test of the difference in the mean category scores of the five most able and five least able readers revealed, for narrational responses alone, a difference significant at the two percent level. This finding seemed to support an observation by the investigator that high percentages of factual restatements of the narrative were made by readers who experienced difficulty in comprehending. The slow readers seemed almost to repeat elements of the story in an attempt to clarify its meaning. In other ways, however, tested reading ability was not related to response data in this study, even though the statistical analysis of data for the entire group could not account for the obvious qualitative distinctions found in the responses of individuals who scored high and low on the reading tests.

b. Mental ability, as measured by the Thurstone Primary Mental Abilities—Intermediate Form, was not significantly related to the reading responses.

c. The types of reading responses were not significantly related to scores of the entire group on the measures developed in this study to suggest the degree of affection in the family and of attitudes toward materialism. However, some indication of the way in which attitudes toward materialism may affect responses was indicated by a finding on *t* test of a difference in the mean self-involvement scores to two stories for five girls who were high and the five who were low in attitudes toward materialism. This difference, significant at the one percent level, was found in reactions to "All the Years of Her Life" and "Reverdy," stories which do not involve major conflicts between moral and material values. Differences were not found in the re-

sponses to the two remaining stories in which the conflict of moral and material values is paramount. The finding suggests that as such values become prominently featured in a story, the difference in the degree of self-involvement of the two groups declines, the five least materialistic girls becoming increasingly involved in a story situation which poses a challenge to their personal value structures.

d. Low socioeconomic status, as suggested by the Minnesota Scale for Paternal Occupations, tends to be associated with high narrational and low interpretational scores but is unrelated to other kinds of responses. These findings were indicated by values of x^2 obtained in testing the distribution of the category scores of 26 subjects from the upper socioeconomic groups against those of 18 from lower socioeconomic groups. For narrational and interpretational scores, the values of x^2 are sufficiently large that the null hypothesis can be rejected at the 10 percent level. However, this high narrational-low interpretational response pattern may be more characteristic of low reading ability rather than "low socioeconomic" status. Differences in the mean reading scores of the high and low socioeconomic groups on the Diagnostic Reading Test, Survey Section, are significant at the five percent level. This offers fresh evidence of the relationship between reading ability and percentages of narrational responses, and possibly of the impact of a restricted experiential background on school achievement. Quite possibly, the subjects from lower socioeconomic levels, lacking an extensive background of experiences on which to draw in making interpretations, are forced to rely on a literal, factual kind of response in reading literature.

e. Evidence on the relationship of the reading responses to fourteen personality characteristics measured by scales of the California Psychological Inventory is fragmentary and inconclusive. No attempt will be made here to present all of the 168 separate relationships which were computed.[38] Among the more interesting findings were these:

(1) Certain moderate yet significant relationships were found between the reading responses and scores on single scales of the California Psychological Inventory. For example, boys who made many self-involvement responses tended to rate high on the Tolerance scale which identified individuals possessing such traits as under-

[38]These data are available from the writer.

standing, alertness, and sensitivity to others in social relationships (r = .435, significant beyond the five percent level). Also for the boys, self-involvement responses were associated with Intellectual Efficiency (r = .431), and Honor Point Ratio (r = .482), findings which seem to couple the involvement reaction with intellectual activity. These coefficients, significant at the five percent level, appear to conflict with the findings of no relationship between the responses and scores on the Thurstone Test of Primary Mental Abilities. However, the relationship of measured intelligence to scores on these scales of the CPI is reported as positive but low. What seems to be suggested is a kind of operational intelligence with high scorers found to be thoughtful, resourceful, and possessing the ability to draw inferences, whereas low scorers are confused, shallow, and "lack insight into (their) own motives and behavior."[39]

For the girls, interpretational scores were related positively to Dominance (r = .406) and negatively to Delinquency (r = .47) with both relationships significant at the five percent level. The finding, supported by significant differences in the means of interpretational scores of the high and low scorers on the CPI, suggests that girls who make many interpretational responses are self-reliant, verbally fluent, capable of thinking for themselves, and independent in their thinking, since these traits are characteristic of high scorers of Dominance. However, the low Delinquency scores suggest that they are also industrious, responsible, dependable, have overcontrolled impulses, and conform by doing what is prescribed. One wonders whether girls with such traits would not learn to make more interpretational reactions in responding to stories becauses they believe that this type of response is desired. Most teachers of English tend to stress interpretation in the classroom; those girls who are predisposed to conform in social situations may accept the approved pattern of response more readily than do others.

Other relationships were not statistically significant at the five percent level, and even those which have been presented indicate that the relationship of personality variables and reading responses varies according to sex.

(2) Clusters of two or three traits appear characteristic of certain types of responders. For example, high percentages of interpretational scores seem associated with interest and ability in intellectual

[39]Gough, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

activity, as reflected in high scores on Intellectual Efficiency, Academic Achievement, and Honor Point Ratio on the California Psychological Inventory. Responders who make many associational responses tend to have high ratings on Status, Flexibility, Intellectual Efficiency, and Honor Point Ratio—a constellation which seems associated with such traits as insight, intelligence, resourcefulness, fluency in thought, and possession of breadth of interests. Findings of this type suggest that researchers studying the interrelationships of personality and literary response might well focus attention on the impact of broad personality patterns or constellations of characteristics rather than on single personality traits.

The case studies of 13 readers revealed certain additional evidence indicating ways in which personal characteristics influence literary responses. However, the complexity of the relationships and the individual variation tend to prevent any easy generalization. Moreover, the problem of obtaining clear-cut, easily interpreted evidence is compounded by the difficulty of developing precise measures both of the responses and of personal traits.

TABLE VI

Percentages of Total Responses Made after Each Division for Each Category

CATEGORY	DIVISIONS OF STORIES						
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
I. *Literary Judgment*							
Boys	2.67	1.93	1.38	1.80	1.61	5.46	14.85
Girls	3.00	1.20	1.52	1.41	1.82	5.96	14.91
II. *Interpretational*							
Boys	5.38	6.35	6.91	7.30	8.35	8.41	42.70
Girls	5.86	7.30	6.73	7.25	8.60	8.05	43.79
III. *Narrational*							
Boys	3.08	3.33	3.05	3.69	4.57	3.64	21.36
Girls	2.79	2.64	2.20	2.53	3.22	2.95	16.33
IV. *Associational*							
Boys	.75	.99	.45	.26	.47	.53	3.45
Girls	.35	.35	.54	.24	.20	.71	2.39
V. *Self-involvement*							
Boys	1.74	2.46	2.33	2.38	2.14	2.24	13.29
Girls	1.54	3.46	2.98	3.24	3.03	2.56	16.81
VI. *Prescriptive Judgment*							
Boys	.26	.49	.55	.60	.54	.26	2.70
Girls	.49	.67	.58	.34	1.10	.43	3.61
VII. *Miscellaneous*							
Boys	.43	.24	.33	.12	.18	.35	1.65
Girls	.28	.40	.73	.17	.20	.38	2.16
TOTAL							
BOYS	14.31	15.79	15.00	16.15	17.86	20.89	100.00
GIRLS	14.31	16.02	15.28	15.18	18.17	21.04	100.00

V. The Development of Responses While Reading

The process of reading and reacting to a short story is a psychological event which extends over a period of time. Some insight into the development of the process was obtained here by sampling the reactions of readers at the six selected intervals during the complete event. In addition to the analysis of the total number of responses which has already been reported, the sequences of responses obtained at the end of reading each of the six divisions of the stories were studied. This analysis indicated how a reader's pattern of response while reading differs from the pattern which he reveals at the end of reading and how particular features in the content of short stories may influence the reader's response patterns.

This kind of investigation appears to provide a reasonably valid portrait of the reading responses. Verbal transcripts—spoken reproductions of ideas, feelings, and reactions—seem to be closer to the internal psychological event of responding than do the written reports used in earlier studies. Moreover, the observable spontaneity and lack of tension in the reading interviews convinced the investigator of the sincerity of most subjects. Although subjective, this evaluation by the interviewer was made by the only individual in a position to judge. Direct indications of the effect of breakage of the stories is unobtainable short of a replication experiment, but considerable evidence suggests that individuals continually organize, sift, and evaluate their perceptions when these are incomplete.[40] Moreover, research in psychology has indicated the value of obtaining external descriptions of internal processes.[41] As Werner writes,

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[40]Ernest Hilgard, "The Role of Learning in Perception," in Robert Blake, Glenn Ramsey, *et al.* (eds.), *Perception: An Approach to Personality* (New York: Ronald Press, 1951), pp. 95-119; G. Murphy and J. E. Hochberg, "Perceptual Development; Some Tentative Hypotheses," *Psychological Review,* 58 (September, 1951), 332-337.

[41]For example, see Paul Schilder, "On the Development of Thought," and "Studies Concerning the Psychology and Symptomatology of General Paresis," in David Rappaport (ed.), *Organization and Pathology of Thought* (New York: Columbia University, 1951), pp. 497-580; David Krech and A. Calvin, "Levels of Perceptual Organization and Cognition," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* 48 (July, 1953), 394-400.

> Psychological events are unfolding processes—no matter whether we are concerned with perceptual, conceptual, or volitional events—and as such are processes which go through stages of development. This development, as in the case of normal perception, can be consummated in a single second's duration, or even in the small part of a second. Or, as in intellectual events, it may continue through a considerable period of time, days and weeks, perhaps. . . . In suitable instances it is possible to follow this development.[42]

Mean percentage scores based on data for all four stories presented in Table VI indicate more variability in certain categories than in others. Figure 1 presents a graphic portrait of the development of the mean responses. The data reveal that:

a. Narrational and associational responses remain relatively constant for all six divisions, with the percentage scores exceedingly small. The fact that these responses are not concentrated in particular divisions indicates that the readers associate elements in the story with their own experience or judge behavior of characters at any moment during the reading of a story, rather than only at the end of reading.

b. The dominant response is the interpretational one. This increases gradually for both boys and girls from about five or six percent of the total number of responses at the end of reading the first division to more than eight percent in reactions to the final divisions. This finding is somewhat encouraging, since ultimately understanding of literature must reside in great measure on ability to interpret the meanings of particular selections. Certainly it suggests that many young readers seek to understand the motivations of characters and the forces underlying plot and incident.

c. For both boys and girls, the percentage of literary judgments appears to be comparatively high in responses to the first divisions of the stories but falls off sharply in reactions to the subsequent divisions. The reactions to divisions 2 through 5 are approximately half the value of percentage scores for division 1. For both groups, however, a dramatic increase is observable in the percentage of literary judgment responses which are made to the sixth and final division, the values of the percentage scores increasing more than threefold. Clearly the readers of both sexes tend to judge stories in terms of

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[42]Heinz Werner, *Comparative Psychology of Mental Development* (Chicago: Follett, 1948), p. 564.

literary values to a greater extent when they commence reading or complete reading than they do as they become engrossed in the central experiences depicted in the literature. The judgments made after the reading of the first segment tend to be quick generalizations concerning such stylistic matters as the author's presentation of the exposition, whereas the final judgments often reflect attempts to assess the total selection.

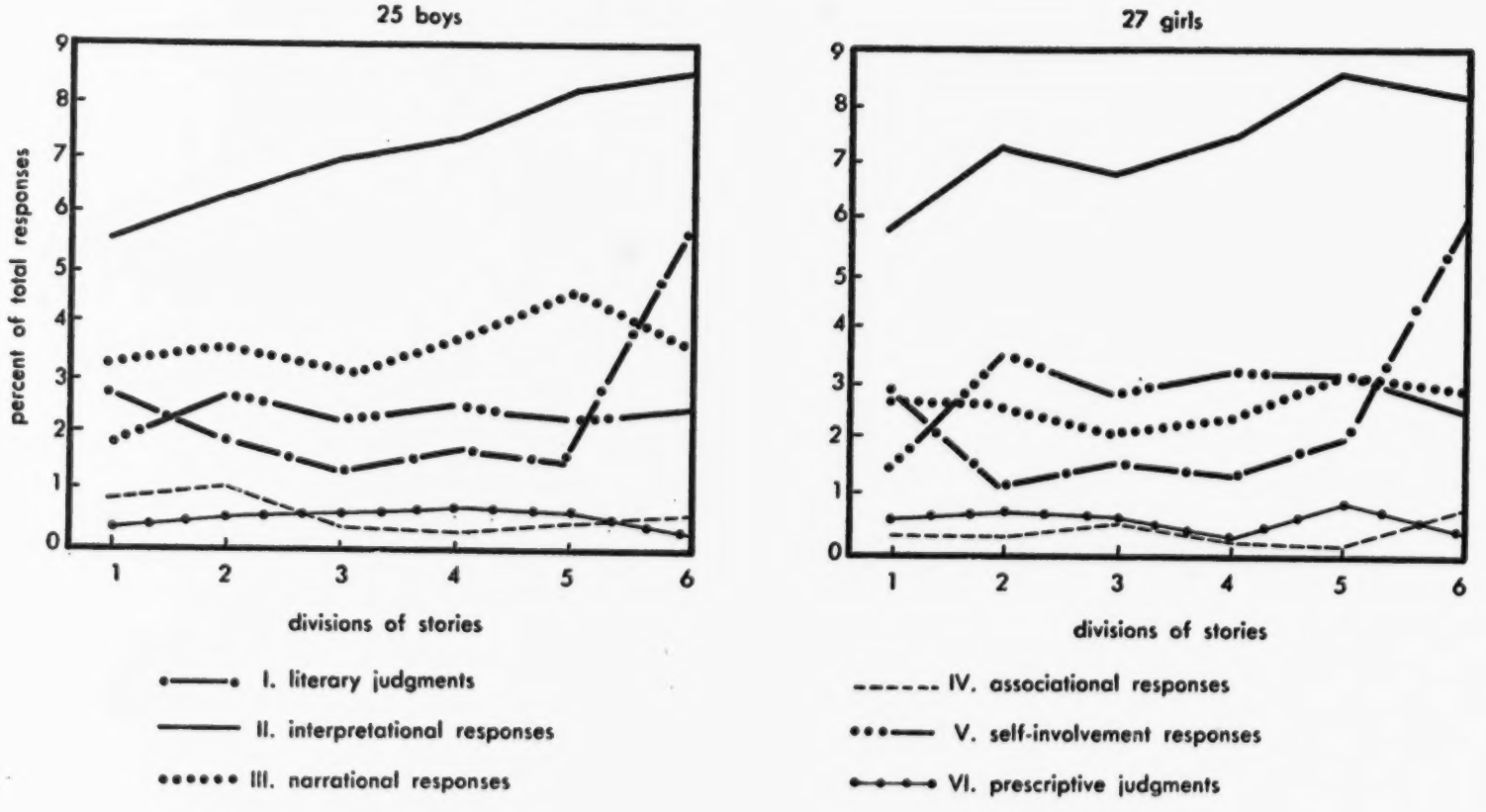
d. Paralleling the pattern for literary judgment is the development of self-involvement reactions. These occur less frequently in reactions to the first division than to subsequent divisions, initial percentages of 1.54 for the girls and 1.74 for the boys rising to 3.46 and 2.46 percent and remaining at the levels for reactions to the subsequent divisions. The statements coded under self-involvement indicate varying degrees of identification and rejection; not until after the exposition of a story is read and considered do the percentages of responses indicating emotional involvement tend to increase. This increase is usually reflected beginning with reaction to division 2.

e. Possible covariation of literary judgments and self-involvement responses is suggested by certain shifts in the kinds of responses. When involved, as during the reading of the central portions of these stories, the subjects made fewer literary judgments. This apparent inverse relationship does not conflict with the earlier finding through partial correlation technique of a high positive relationship between the total response in these categories ($r_{12.3} = .60$ for girls and .70 for boys when the total number of responses was held constant). The two types of responses seem to reinforce one another, with readers who are emotionally involved formulating more literary judgments even though the responses occur at different times. Many of the evaluations of the story as literature occur either before the reader has become involved or after an extended period during which the subject seems considerably involved in the central experience or the character whom he is interpreting or identifying with or rejecting. Only when the reading of a story is completed do literary judgments become a major concern.

In addition to the overall patterns revealed here, some evidence suggested ways in which specific features in the content of the stories affected the reading pattern of boys and girls. A separate examination of the patterns of response to each of the four selections revealed patterns which resembled closely the overall tendencies discussed

Figure 1

The Development of Responses—Mean Scores



earlier. However, unusual reactions to a particular division of a story occasionally indicated the special influences of the content. The complete and detailed analysis of these tendencies illustrates the complexity of the reading patterns. For example, a perceptible increase is noticeable in the associational responses of boys in the reactions to "All the Years of Her Life." Their total percentage is 6.25 associational responses as against 2.46 percent for the girls and as against mean scores of 3.45 and 2.39 for associational responses of both groups to the other stories. The increase is almost certainly related to the boys' recognition of a basic plot situation (incipient delinquent with family problems) which reminds them of other stories, TV plays, and films. Either the girls were less agile in recognizing the similarity or, more probably, were less familiar with stories of juvenile crime.

Another interesting example of sex differences in reactions to aspects of the content of stories is indicated in the 6.3 percent prescriptive judgments made by girls as against 3.65 percent for the boys in responding to "All the Years of Her Life." For all stories, the girls respond with slightly more prescriptive judgments than do the boys (3.63 to 2.7). The total difference is primarily caused by the reactions to "All the Years of Her Life." The increase in the expressions of absolute opinion concerning the behavior of characters in this story reflects the unusual sensitivity of feminine readers in this study to the adult-adolescent conflict situations in the literature. These are reactions in which readers express prescriptive judgments concerning the behavior of characters and seem more interested in taking a definite position regarding a character than in understanding the story situation. The highest percentages of these judgments occur in responses to the first division (where Alfred has been apprehended shoplifting and the storekeeper threatens to call the police) and to the fifth division (where the mother turns against her son). Although few judgments are directed at the boy, the majority express complete disapproval of the ways in which either the storekeeper or the mother is acting (e.g., "I don't think she should say that."). Similar increases in the percentages of prescriptive judgments made by girls in response to situations involving adult-adolescent conflicts are found in the transcripts for other stories.

Even more interesting variability is apparent in self-involvement responses of boys and girls where, for example, boys tended to be much more affected by "All the Years of Her Life," a story of a youth's

misunderstanding of his mother. The study of individual transcripts also suggests that although some readers tend to identify with certain characters throughout the reading of a story, the degree of identification or rejection of a character, as measured by percentage scores, may shift dramatically according to the feeling and behavior of the character. Thus, in reading "Prelude," a reader who initially seems to identify with protagonist Nancy Hollister during her first dates with Stephen, a boy from a lower socioeconomic group, may later indicate uncertainty in attitude or even rejection of Nancy for her hesitation about accompanying an ill-clad Stephen to a dance. Frequent shifts occur in the direction and intensity of identification and rejection.

VI. Summary of the Quantitative Analysis of the Responses

The free responses of 52 adolescents to four short stories were coded in seven categories determined by an analysis of their content. An overall agreement of .83 was obtained with check-coding by an independent analyst, indicating a reasonable degree of reliability for the content analysis. Coefficients of agreement for the separate categories ranged from .73 to .97. Of the seven types of responses identified, those described as interpretational and narrational responses, literary judgments, and self-involvement reactions occur most frequently. More than 42 percent of all responses were coded as interpretational. Fewer than four percent were coded either as associational, prescriptive judgment, or as miscellaneous responses.

The analysis of coded data reveals that the number of responses which a subject makes is not related to his measured verbal fluency. Also, the percentages of a reader's responses coded in the different categories tend to be reasonably consistent from story to story for those types of reactions which occur the most frequently (interpretational and narrational responses, literary judgments, reactions indicating self-involvement).

Sex differences in response patterns, significant at the 20 percent level of confidence, exist only in responses coded as literary judgments and as self-involvement reactions. However, sex differences occur in individual reactions of boys and girls to specific stories.

A strong positive relationship of self-involvement responses and literary judgments is indicated by partial correlation techniques in which the number of responses in the different categories is correlated while the total number of responses is held constant. An examination of individual transcripts led to the advancement of an hypothesis that readers who become emotionally involved in a story tend to spend more time in analyzing the literary qualities of a story than do uninvolved readers.

The analysis of relationships between personality predispositions, as measured by the California Psychological Inventory, and the reading responses was inconclusive, possibly because inaccuracies in measuring both personality factors and reading responses made clear-cut evidence difficult to obtain. Some variation according to sex was

noted, suggesting that personality predispositions affect the responses of boys and girls in different ways. The complexity and the subtlety of the relationship between personality predisposition and types of reactions to reading tend to cloud precise findings concerning the effect of single traits on the reading responses of the total group. Some evidence has been presented to suggest that two or three related traits frequently are characteristic of certain types of responders. For example, an individual who reacts with many prescriptive judgments tends to score low on the scales for Intellectual Efficiency and Academic Achievement.

Socioeconomic status, as indicated by the Minnesota Scale for Paternal Occupations, does seem to be related to reading responses. Low socioeconomic status appears to increase the percentage of narrational reactions, possibly because readers from culturally disadvantaged social grouping are less able to develop skill in reading. High socioeconomic status is associated with an increase in interpretational reactions. Possibly such readers tend to possess a greater background of personal and literary experiences on which to base their judgments.

Analysis of the development of responses during the complete process of responding indicates that while interpretational responses are clearly dominant, the greatest variation occurs in literary judgments and self-involvement reactions, which appear to vary inversely throughout the reading and responding. For the most part, the literary judgments occur early in responding or after the reading of a story is completed, but they decline perceptibly while the reader is emotionally involved in the central features of the story and while he seems to suspend his objectivity and his tendency to pass judgment.

Some evidence was gathered to suggest how content features in the literary selection affect the responses of boys and girls. Age of a character, for example, seems to influence the degree of self-involvement. The sensitivity of girls to plot situations involving conflicts between adults and adolescents was also noted.

The quantitative analysis suggested continually the complexity of reading responses and the fact that responses to literature are influenced by many factors. For this reason even those relationships which could be statistically demonstrated were difficult to interpret. The 13 case studies assisted the investigator in interpreting much of his data. Important, also, is the qualitative analysis summarized in the next section.

VII. Sources of Difficulty in Literary Interpretation

The analysis of the transcripts into seven categories of response offers a quantitative description of the thought processes of 52 readers to the four short stories. But however valuable the methods of content analysis for classifying different kinds of responses, it fails to reveal important qualitative distinctions. Although many of the 52 adolescents interpreted the stories with perceptiveness and wisdom, certain sources of misinterpretation became clearly evident through a careful study of the transcripts. Occasionally the errors in interpretation were relatively minor and affected only slightly the reader's understanding of a story; at other times gross distortions colored the reader's total perception of a fictional selection. I. A. Richards first demonstrated that values for teaching may result from studying the misinterpretations of readers.[43] Some of his terminology has been used in this study.

A study of the transcripts reveals six sources of difficulty to be particularly widespread among these 52 adolescent readers: the reader fails to grasp the most obvious meanings of the author; the reader relies on stock responses when faced with a seemingly familiar situation; the reader is "happiness bound"; the reader approaches literature with certain critical predispositions; the reader is sidetracked by irrelevant associations; and the reader is determined to achieve certainty in interpretation and is unwilling to hold judgment in abeyance. Other causes of difficulty occur, but these are the most common. Because the four stories were selected as representative of much fiction that is included in anthologies for ninth and tenth graders, the six sources of difficulty in interpretation may well represent fairly widespread reading problems of adolescents in this age group.

Failure to Grasp the Meaning

Basic to understanding a work of fiction is a reasonable comprehension of narrative. Some readers, notably those whose scores on the Diagnostic Reading Test, Survey Section, indicated some degree of retardation, experience difficulty in grasping the essential intention of the author. The problems were of three distinct kinds.

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[43] I. A. Richards, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-305.

1) Individuals misunderstand key words and become lost in the narrative. Thus, a boy misreads "magician" for "musician" and accepts the incongruity that Stephen Karoladis' father in "Prelude" wishes his son to become a concert magician. The fact that the boy is an accomplished pianist is apparently overlooked by a reader who displays no tendency to question his misreading. Such a reader's real problem is not the initial mistake but the persistence of the error in his subsequent responses. In responding to "Reverdy," a girl who misread "harbor" for "arbor" continually refers to Reverdy and her boy friend as "practicing sign language" on the floor of the "harbor" with "all the lights out." During the interviews, the serious demeanor of subjects reporting such incongruous situations seems almost incredible. All too infrequently do such readers consider the logical inconsistency of their interpretations.

2) Readers also experience difficulty when they fail to grasp the implications of details presented by the author. Thus, several fail to perceive that the Toastmaster's story in "The Man in the Shadow" refers to the history of Clews' life. The Toastmaster does fail to identify Clews by name, but no other interpretation is possible. The inference is clear to any reader who reflects on the reason why Clews "drains the contents of his glass and gulps hard" as the Toastmaster's story is unfolded. A particularly literally-minded reader responds to this incident with only the following comment: "I wonder what they're drinking? Gulping is - uh - you know, hard."

3) Sometimes readers make incorrect inferences. For example, in responding to "All the Years of Her Life," one boy is impressed by the description of the mother as having hastily dressed. ("Her hand at her throat held her light coat tight so that her dress would not show.") When this reader later finds that the druggist is "a bit embarrassed by her lack of terror and her simplicity," the boy apparently assumes that these comments refer to Mrs. Higgins' lack of concern for her appearance rather than to worry over her son facing arrest. Consequently, the boy objects to the druggist's attitude toward the woman's clothes. Mistaken inferences of this type occur in the responses of the most able readers; some even seem to be justified momentarily by facts presented in the story. The perceptive readers, however, tend to review and modify their generalizations when later evidence proves their original ideas to be untenable.

Individual misinterpretations of a total story arise from a failure

to keep details suspended in memory and to relate to details presented later in the story. One girl who mentions Clews' wife in her reactions to the second segment of "The Man in the Shadow" has completely forgotten about the character by the time she reads the final segment of the story. Noting that the wife appears in the final division after a break in the continuity of the narrative, the reader assumes that Clews has just married.

Two disquieting tendencies seem to characterize adolescents with such difficulties: their apparent unwillingness to admit the existence of comprehension problems and their tenacious hold on the mistaken notions which they do express. In general, those readers who score high on reading tests and make the fewest misinterpretations are individuals who are willing to admit misunderstanding a work or passing a hasty judgment which must later be modified. Many, either because of their insecurity in the interview or because they have never learned to evaluate their impressions as they read, doggedly cling to their misinterpretations. The causes of many incongruities are less obvious in the final responses to the stories than in response to the earlier segments. The study demonstrates again and again the importance of helping students learn to evaluate their impressions and to weigh evidence in the terms presented by the author.

Reliance on Stock Responses

Of all of the distortions and misconceptions of literature occurring throughout the transcripts, one of the more distressing is the widespread reliance of the majority of adolescents on familiar and stereotyped patterns of thinking as they interpret situations in literature. Stock responses—familiar clichés and stereotyped explanations of behavior in responding to literature—represent the avoidance of individual thinking and may lead to considerable difficulty in understanding. Thus, a number of readers, mesmerized by the notion that Nancy Hollister is running for prom queen in "Prelude," conjure up familiar visions of the all-American girl and then experience problems in accepting Nancy's actions. ("Popular girls don't like music"; "She likes to go to concerts. I think that's abnormal"; "Usually the best looking gal has the best looking guy.")

Stock reactions are easily recognized because they occur repeatedly in the transcripts. In addition to the idealized picture of the all-American girl discussed above, five general themes may be

regularly identified in the responses of these adolescents. Although variations on those themes may be observed, the essential thought remains unimpaired. The five seem worthwhile identifying, inasmuch as situations which evoke such stock reactions recur frequently in literature written for adolescents. The five general themes together with some responses illustrative of each are these:

1. *Adolescents are not responsible for their own actions.*

   "The snobbishness of the sorority girls is caused by their parents."

   "Like father, like son."

   "If she gets in trouble, it's her mother's fault."

   "Parents should stop their kids from running around."

2. *A boy or girl in trouble doesn't have a very healthy home life.*

   "He's always losing jobs cause he didn't have the right bringing up."

   "No guidance in the family causes delinquency."

   "He wants to belong."

3. *Wealth and happiness are incompatible.*

   "If you have success, you're unhappy."

   "Success isn't measured by money."

   "People are the same regardless of money."

4. *When adults and adolescents are in conflict, the adults are almost always wrong.*

   "The mother shouldn't be so suspicious of her daughter."

   "Alfred is unjustly accused of shoplifting." (This fiction is maintained sometimes even after the boy has admitted his stealing.)

5. *Punishment for adolescent wrongdoing accomplishes little and should be avoided.*

   "Alfred should have another chance" (even though the story clearly indicates that he has had several).

   "His mother should have a talk with him."

   "When a guy does good for them, that's what changes a lot of guys."

Whether one approves or disapproves of the basic concepts expressed by these pat, somewhat aphoristic statements on behavior, the reliance of readers on such trite and commonplace ideas as a substitute for their own thinking must be deplored. Stock ideas of this type seem widely held in the adolescent peer culture.

Stock responses are frequently utilized, encouraged, and perpetuated by the motion pictures and the television. They occur frequently in fiction, particularly in writing of inferior quality, and many hack writers deliberately exploit such automatic reader reactions. As I. A. Richards explains in references to stock responses to poetry,

> These have their opportunity whenever a poem seems to, or does, involve views and emotions already fully prepared in the reader's mind, so that what happens appears to be more of the reader's doing than the poet's. The button is pressed, and then the author's work is done, for immediately the record starts playing in quasi- (or total) independence of the poem which is supposed to be its origin or instrument.[44]

Two problems in interpreting result from failure of readers to recognize stock responses. In responding to worthwhile literary selections, readers who rely on them are often led to distortions of character and situations and thus are prevented from grasping the full intent of the author. In reading inferior selections which depend upon such clichés, readers sometimes are unable to distinguish the genuine from the contrived. Indeed, reactions to "The Man in the Shadow," which seems to the investigator to have been deliberately written to evoke certain standard emotions and ideas in the reader, seldom seemed to reflect much awareness of the story's stock characters and stereotyped situations. Two problems for education thus become apparent: readers must learn to guard against relying on clichés as substitutes for thinking, and readers must develop an ability to identify passages in which authors use stock situations in an attempt to capitalize on standard emotions and beliefs.

Happiness Binding

Many adolescent readers in this study seem to be incorrigible romantics. Regardless of the logic of events and circumstances, they continually assume, infer, and hope for the best. They are "happiness bound" both in their demand for fairy tale solutions and in their

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[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

frequent unwillingness to face the realities of unpleasant interpretation. Consequently, their sentimental overemphasis on the good frequently leads them to distort and misinterpret both characters and their actions. For example, three different readers when forced to face the open admission that Alfred had stolen lipstick and toothpaste in "All the Years of Her Life" immediately suggest that the boy must be stealing to support a poor mother. The realization that the great majority of these 52 adolescents are "happiness bound" in their approach to interpreting literature is one of the dominant impressions which result from an initial reading of the transcripts.

The severity of many of these distortions may be suggested by indicating some of the responses to the concluding incidents in "Prelude." On the average, the readers are more highly involved in "Prelude" than in any other story; possibly for this reason some of the most extreme examples of "happiness binding" occur in the reactions of boys and girls to such dilemmas of the characters as the following:

Situations in the Story	*Anticipated Solution or Explanation* (The measured intelligence quotient of the responder, when available, is indicated in parentheses.)
1. Stephen's inability to rent a tuxedo.	"I think that if he doesn't have him some money to–buy a tux with, Nancy will pay for the tux."
2. Stephen's arrival in an ill-fitting tuxedo.	"Nancy's dilemma was planned–there seemed to be a test of Nancy to see what she would do–Stephen and Nancy's mother didn't actually plan to have her go to the prom in the clothes he was in" (*sic*). (129)
	"He had more respect than to go like that–I still think he's planned something–I think he probably worked himself to the bone to go." (132)
3. Stephen's failure to bring a corsage.	"I think the flowers will be waiting for Nancy at his father's house."
	"Why don't they pick flowers from somebody's yard?"

4. Nancy's decision to accompany Stephen.	"It was just–downright wonderful the way it ended and–she went . . . I could just picture her flying down the stairs more or less like the movies, you know, and into his arms." (100)
	"It was wonderful the way she made up her mind that she'd let all the kids know–she liked him, instead of giving him up and breaking his heart, and he'd probably not ever play as good as he did and probably always be sad." (95)

(The story ends with Nancy's decision, but a few readers elect to continue the narrative in their responses.)

5. What may happen at the dance.	"I don't know how things would turn out at the dance, but, I mean, if she went with him and everything, and her schoolmates they'd see, I mean, they'd see that too, I guess." (125)
	"In the end they'll [the sorority girls] find out how beautifully he plays." (140)
6. And what of the more distant future?	"Maybe he'll do a great concert and be a rich man." (95)
	"If these people at the prom did make fun of him, someday when he becomes a great artist they'll be sorry they did." (112)

Quite obviously many readers give free rein to their emotions in interpreting stories unless characters and events are so carefully delineated as to prevent such flights of fancy. Clearly also the responses above indicate that "happiness binding" can occur regardless of the intelligence of the reader.

The quest for the pleasant and the pleasurable is a universal human motive. One cannot object to the yearning but only to the lack of rational control of feelings which encourages readers to accept improbable conclusions which conflict sharply with the facts at hand.

Undoubtedly the historical acceptance of a *deus ex machina* to solve dilemmas in literature is related to this human longing for the pleasant rather than the plausible. Yet how pleasant must the situations be? The dénouement to "The Man in the Shadow," which seems to the investigator to be both sentimental and contrived to present a "happy ending," still leaves at least one reader dissatisfied. Although Clews receives an accolade from classmates at the twenty-fifth reunion dinner, spends the evening reminiscing with close friends, and brings the governor home to spend the night, one reader still objects:

> "It didn't end right . . . I think that one of his old classmates who's such a—who's supposed to be such a successful man, you know, should have given him a job in his business that would have room for advancement, you know."

Critical Predispositions

Occasionally among these 52 adolescents are readers who approach a story with a Procrustean yardstick which they endeavor to apply regardless of the uniqueness of a single work of fiction. Obviously readers must develop criteria for judging the worth of literature, but the criteria must be sufficiently flexible to preserve the integrity of individual selections. Sometimes students become concerned with specific technical aspects of the writing that they seem to prejudge a selection according to the presence or absence of a certain feature.

Most common of all critical predispositions in the transcripts of these 52 adolescents is the concern for situations which adolescents consider to be "typical" or "true to life." So dedicated are some persons to judging this "true to life"-ness that they fail to consider why an event seems probable or whether a character's responses are really genuine or are merely patterned after some accepted norm. In short, certain adolescents seem to rely on such jargon as a means of evading original thinking; others seem genuinely to believe that the single significant test of literature is whether it is "true to life." In either event, such a predisposition almost inevitably constricts the reader's interpretations. In most cases their notion of what constitutes "true to life" is narrow and restrictive and without reference to its appropriateness to the literary selection or, when such narrowness is not present, such readers see "true to life" as the *only* test of literary merit.

A second common predisposition which operates in a similar

manner is the concern for "good description." Certain readers demand that a story include a complete catalogue of each character's physical qualities. ("How old is he?" "What does he look like?") They are more concerned with the author's use of "descriptive adjectives" than with the essential conflict in a story. Their reactions to stories are at times vapid to the point of being meaningless. For example, a final assessment of "All the Years of Her Life" is the following:

> I think they should have made [the mother] a little more glamorous—physically and not just mentally—in the way she handled it. And Alfred wasn't explained too much. I mean they could have gone into a little something about him so you get an idea of what sort of a boy he is. And of course Mr. Carr—I don't think he should have been explained because well—I think he was explained enough . . . I mean, it explained that he wore glasses and was rather short.

These are the critical predispositions which most frequently appear to affect responses adversely. Contrary to a hypothesis of the investigator, a disposition to search for obvious morals in the stories was displayed by only one or two individuals. Clearly these fixations on description and on "true to life"-ness are acquired concerns. Teachers of literature throughout the whole English curriculum from primary to high school might well examine current instructional practices to determine whether such inflexible yardsticks are encouraged or discouraged in classroom teaching.

Irrelevant Associations

The irrelevant and sometimes erratic associations of readers may dislocate the sequence of responses to literature. Associations which occur at particularly critical moments, such as when the reader is in the process of distilling a conclusion, may so distract an individual that he is unable to return to his original thought. When this occurs, the reader's final conception of a story sometimes becomes less a unified picture of a work of art than a series of scattered, unrelated impressions. Two types of associations may be identified.

Association of the elements in a story with the personal experiences of the reader is dangerous to interpretation only when uncontrolled. In most cases readers seem to perceive far too few of these relationships. Occasionally, however, a reader appears to give such free rein to every haphazard memory which recurs to him while reading that he is completely distracted from the narrative at hand. Thus,

the sorority girls in "Prelude" remind one reader of peer group conditions in South Dakota, and this memory induces an entire chain of associations concerning school and social life in that state. The element in the story which initially suggests South Dakota is entirely forgotten in the unrestricted flow of ideas which follows. This inability to control extensive unrelated personal associations may be characteristic of some individuals. Examples of the misleading effects of such personal memories are found primarily in the transcripts of three readers, but these transcripts are replete with illustrations of the phenomenon.

More widespread are confusions resulting from the association of elements in a story with memories of fiction, motion pictures, radio, and television. Readers who are reminded of a familiar scene or character by a situation in a story will sometimes ascribe the motives in the recalled drama or story to the characters about whom they are presently reading. For example, two subjects are reminded of an educational film on narcotics by the opening sequence of "All the Years of Her Life"; both immediately assume that the druggist has discovered Alfred stealing "dope" because the situation in the drugstore presumably resembles an incident in the film.

A second problem is created by association of incidents with earlier experiences in reading stories or in watching plays when readers make single, and sometimes superficial, connections and then become embroiled in reminiscences of the work recalled. Here again the failure to control either the primary or secondary associations serves only to distract the readers entirely from the literary work being considered. Thus, the ending of "All the Years of Her Life" reminds one girl of Shirley Jackson's story, "The Lottery," presumably because both dénouements "surprised" her and left her wondering what had happened. Rather than compare elements of similarity and difference in the two stories, the girl finds that her initial thought of "The Lottery" suggests other elements in that story. Soon she is engaged in a reverie concerning the Shirley Jackson story, and "All the Years of Her Life" is completely forgotten.

Undisciplined and irrelevant associations of this nature occur frequently in the responses of subjects in this study. Comparatively few of the readers demonstrate much facility in controlling and evaluating their memories.

The Search for Certainty

Related to some of the other sources of difficulty but more subtle in effect is the tendency of some readers to insist on clarity and definiteness in interpretation even when clues in the story are fragmentary and minimal. Some individuals feel the compulsion to achieve a complete understanding of characters and events. Such readers are not deterred by an absence in the story of the evidence on which to base sound opinions. They fail to demonstrate any tendency to withhold or suspend judgment until complete information is available. Thus, readers who are disturbed by Mrs. Higgins' direction to her son, "not to tell a word of this to your father," must explain the reason for her comment ("The father has driven the mother into a nervous wreck"; "She's afraid he will beat the boy"; etc.) even though no explanation is directly suggested in the story. Other adolescents (particularly girls) feel compelled to explain the motivation behind the mother's severe restriction of her daughter in "Reverdy." ("The mother must have gotten a raw deal when she was young"; "The mother is jealous"; etc.)

This drive for certainty can lead readers to incorrect or exaggerated inferences. The more fragmentary or ambiguous the clues in a story, the greater the tendency for the interpretations of readers to be based on personal feelings and effects. Many illustrations of "happiness binding," for example, occur when reader judgments are based on incomplete evidence.

A few of the adolescents do reveal an exploratory and tentative approach to interpretation which others might well be encouraged to emulate. Such readers endeavor to obtain all available information before making a final assessment and deliberately hold judgment in abeyance until they feel that understanding is complete. They do not appear to be disturbed by apparent ambiguities in a story, nor are they upset by unexpected shifts in the behavior of characters. They merely examine such shifts in terms of probable motivations. Normally such readers may be identified as those who express while reading such qualified judgments of characters as "I think they're all right; I couldn't say right now," or "I think they were justified but possibly in Part 2 there's more that I can base a decision on." Readers who demand certainty of interpretation seldom qualify their opinions in this way.

The difference in the two attitudes toward ambiguity is perhaps most apparent in the transcripts for "All the Years of Her Life." In this story the behavior of the mother shifts dramatically and is virtually inexplicable until the final paragraph. Initially expected by her son to be enraged by his apprehension for stealing, she is poised, considerate, and well mannered in securing his release. She turns on him vehemently and bewails his actions on reaching the privacy of their home, but is later observed by the boy to be in a state of nervous exhaustion —alone, frightened, and "broken," and "it seemed to him that this was the first time he had ever looked upon his mother." Readers who are willing to withhold final assessment of the mother until the conclusion of the story experience much less difficulty in comprehending this selection than do those who seem certain of her nature following the initial sequence in the drugstore. For example, a boy who reacts to the initial passage with the qualified judgment, "The mother seems pretty nice in here, but you don't know what she will be like when she gets home," is much better prepared for the surprising but consistent shift in her behavior than is a reader who initially pictures her as "just what a mother ought to be." Because their judgments crystallize too soon in reading fiction, readers of the latter type appear unable to follow the logical development of a characterization and hence either misinterpret situations in stories or lose much of the potential values in the experience of responding to fiction.

One characteristic which searchers for certainty seem to share is a fixation on the obvious features of a plot. They insist on a lack of ambiguity in all aspects of the narrative, even in those strands which are unrelated to the central problem of the story. They almost always misinterpret literature which derives its primary value from the experiences and feelings of the characters rather than from the narrative exposition of the plot. Thus the endings of "All the Years of Her Life" and "Reverdy" are almost universally condemned by those readers who want to know what happened. Essentially, the former story is the expression of a boy's experience in understanding the real motivations of his mother for the first time, and the latter is the projection of a girl's feelings of shame. Viewed in terms of these purposes, the selections are complete and unified. However, individuals who respond primarily at the narrative level are often distracted from a more profound analysis of the selection by their insistence that even obscure strands of the narrative be completed. Thus they express

interest in such questions as: Did Alfred reform? What happened when his father came home? Did the mother "apologize" for talking to him that way? What happened to Reverdy? How did her parents feel to find her gone? Such questions are unrelated to the essential experiences which the authors of these stories are trying to convey. Quite possibly in a regular classroom situation the easiest method of identifying readers who fail to develop an exploratory and tentative approach to weighing evidence is to study those persons who perpetually express an interest in establishing the finality of unimportant strands of the plot.

Not all readers are restricted by the six difficulties discussed here, and some individuals are troubled by only a single problem. A few examples may be found in the transcripts of adolescents who respond with astonishing precision and perceptiveness. However, all six of the barriers to sound interpretation are sufficiently prevalent in the transcripts to justify the assumption that such difficulties must be rather widespread if these 52 subjects are in any way representative of readers in this age group. Teachers who are interested in encouraging the appreciation of literature might well consider which instructional procedures tend to reduce or eliminate the difficulties in interpretation which were discovered here.

VIII. Discussion of Findings

This study explored a way of analyzing the emotional and ideational responses of individuals to four literary selections. The method revealed certain patterns of responses and certain kinds of responders; it illuminated the impact on the interpretation of literature of individual experiences and of personal predispositions, and it revealed six basic sources of difficulty which adolescents encounter in interpreting short stories. The results suggest that although certain group tendencies are observable in the reading reactions of adolescents, individual variation is caused by the unique influence of the abilities, predispositions, and experiential background of each reader. Clearly, also, the findings suggest the importance to research of considering reactions which occur during the process of reading a story as well as those which occur when the reading has been completed.

The patterns formed by the six types of category responses should not be regarded as offering definitive descriptions of the ways in which all readers will respond to literature. More precisely, these might be considered as patterns approximating the normal pattern of responses for these 52 subjects or at the most for adolescents in the 15-year-old age group who are reading stories involving crucial experiences of adolescents. In a study completed after this one and utilizing the framework for content analysis developed here, Wilson demonstrated that college freshmen respond with a significantly higher percentage of interpretational responses than do these adolescents here; he attributes the difference to the greater maturity of his subjects.[45] His subjects, of course, profited from the instruction in literature provided during the last two or three years of secondary school. Also, the fact that he relied on written, rather than oral, responses may contribute to the difference.

The general hypothesis underlying the study—that general or universal group tendencies are observable in the reading responses of adolescents with considerable individual variation resulting from the influence of the abilities, personality predispositions, and the experiential backgrounds of individuals—is proved only in part.

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[45]James Wilson, *loc. cit.*

Group tendencies are clearly demonstrated in the development of interpretational, literary judgment, self-involvement, and narrational scores. The data fail to reveal any significant degree of consistency in the scores for associational responses and prescriptive judgments. However, the data reported here, supported by a series of individual case studies, seem to indicate that readers respond to literature in unique and selective ways and that the nature of an individual's reactions is conditioned by the dynamic interplay of a constellation of factors rather than by single causes. Sex differences, for example, do not affect significantly the overall patterns of response but do influence reactions to specific situations in the stories.

One of the more interesting findings is the strong positive correlation between percentages of responses labelled literary judgment and self-involvement, indicating that readers who become extensively involved in stories are also inclined to evaluate the literary qualities of a selection. The two types of reactions were found to covary during the average reader's process of responding to an entire story. Higher percentages of judgmental comments occur in the transcripts for the initial and final divisions of the stories when the readers seem concerned with the selection as a literary creation. Literary judgments decrease and self-involvement percentages rise in the transcripts for the central divisions of the stories. At this time many readers seem to be concerned with the literature as a vicarious emotional experience, and their responses indicate an increase in self-involvement. At the same time their tendency to pass literary judgments declines. Not until making those final or cumulative reactions to a story do many readers again reflect and pass aesthetic judgments.

The quality of individual interpretations was found to be generally unrelated to the intelligence and reading ability of the subjects. Stereotyped reactions, happiness bindings, and other misleading or distorted reactions are found as often among intelligent able readers as are incisive, penetrating observations. Few subjects indicate awareness of contrived or synthetic situations in the literature or of the author's reliance on shopworn, artificial language. The findings of this study suggest that ratings on a standardized reading test, such as the one employed here, do not offer a reliable index of the ability of readers to interpret literary selections.

IX. Implications for Research

The research method developed for recording and analyzing the responses of adolescents while reading seems to yield valuable data concerning the psychological event of responding to a short story. Additional studies, like that by Wilson, may well be designed to apply these approaches to subjects in different age groups or to different literary genres. The method used here to obtain a picture of the extended psychological event of responding to a short story should also be subject to further careful scrutiny. Especially the effect of breakage of the stories on the subjects' reading responses merits study.

The method developed to study adolescent responses while reading a selection might be adapted to evaluate the effectiveness of certain teaching procedures. May some problems in interpretation be alleviated by careful preparation? What differences occur when the teachers prepare readers for concepts which they will encounter or introduce new vocabulary terms prior to reading? A comparison of the reactions of readers who do and do not receive different kinds of preparation could illuminate some of the changes which may occur in response behavior as a result of special teaching procedures.

Whether the responses of these readers to these four stories closely resemble the reactions of adolescents to other kinds of literary selections may be determined only through additional research. The study of responses to stories which depend for effect more on the grasp of form than on response to story situation would offer an interesting contrast, inasmuch as few readers in the present study seem to express interest in such elements. Similarly, studies of the responses of readers of different ages or readers with radically different backgrounds are needed to illuminate other dimensions of response. Interesting insights might also result from a study of the responses of highly trained majors in literature at the college level with the responses obtained from adolescents in this study.

Certain specific findings seem sufficiently important to deserve more exhaustive study. Among these would be the intricate relationship of self-involvement and literary judgment responses and the extent to which readers tend to suspend objectivity during periods of self-

involvement while reading. Worth further investigating, too, is the suggestion that certain types of response patterns may be related to constellations of personality factors rather than to single characteristics. However, this study suggests the complexity of the relationship between personality and response to literature and supplies new evidence to support assertions by earlier researchers that, in research in this area, selected case studies be included as a precaution against oversimplification.

X. Implications for Teaching

Adolescent readers clearly need assistance in learning to interpret literature. The findings indicate that misinterpretations which arise during the process of reading affect the reader's cumulative judgment of a story. Many readers overlook obvious evidence in the narrative and must learn to consider the possible implications of action and dialogue. Others are guided by their emotions in responding and disregard evidence which seems distasteful. The "breakage" method used in this study as a diagnostic method for analyzing the responses of readers to a complete story may be used occasionally in the classroom when teachers wish to help their students learn to weigh evidence while reading. Frequently classroom instruction is limited only to a discussion of stories after the reading is completed without adequate consideration of how these final reactions are constructed.

Techniques which enable the teacher to offer help in how to interpret at times when the interpretations are being made may increase the effectiveness of instruction in literary analysis. A teacher might read a portion of a story to a class, for example, and then ask students to predict the behavior of characters on the basis of the segment presented. A comparison of the responses of students with the actual events in the remaining portion of the story could enable the teacher to deal concretely with such problems as plausibility and objectivity in interpretation. More techniques of this type, which enable the teacher to help the adolescent during the process of reading, need to be developed.

Teachers who wish to utilize the "breakage" approach must guard against violating the aesthetic integrity of the total literary selection. The purpose of studying responses during the process of responding is to help students identify their problems and develop skill in various aspects of responding as they react with whatever intellectual and emotional resources they bring to each story, change and modify their ideas, and ultimately combine their responses into a final cumulative assessment. The teacher cannot permit the reader to respond only to fragments of a story, however useful discussion of responses to such fragments may occasionally be. Rather, the students' reactions to the parts of literary work must ultimately be clearly related to the

total selection if the readers are to grasp the unity which makes any work an artistic selection. Too great an emphasis on responses to separate segments of a story—especially if such reactions are not related to the whole—may prevent some readers from gaining any sense of the whole. For this reason teachers should view the "breakage" method suggested here as only one way of helping students learn to perfect their reactions.

Often teachers will encourage students to read a selection without interruption; then they may probe back from inadequate final interpretations to determine the sources of misinterpretation. Searching questions from the teacher and confrontation of different students' interpretations may lead readers to a reenactment of their own reading processes and ultimately encourage them to assume a more critical view toward their own responses. Readers who are forced to review the processes involved in their own responding may discover elements in a story which have been overlooked or misinterpreted. An honest appraisal of all kinds of responses to reading is necessary for such discussion, of course. Such honesty occurs only in classrooms in which self-criticism is valued and encouraged.

The study also provides new evidence that teachers exercise discretion in recommending to adolescents specific books as an aid to solving their personal problems. An adolescent's reaction to literature which involves problems similar to his own cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty. Case studies conducted as part of this research indicated that intense emotional involvement of some readers may be so painful as to cause them to reject the selection. The affective impulses of others may encourage distorted interpretation. Teachers who do use books and stories in an attempt to modify or shape the attitudes of readers toward themselves and their problems are strongly urged to plan class work so as to allow for lengthy individual conferences with adolescents for the purpose both of discussing the problem in the books and for clarifying the distortions and misunderstanding which may arise.

The widespread "happiness binding" in the reactions of these 52 subjects and the misleading effect of uncontrolled emotional reactions suggest that individuals in this age-group need extensive help in learning how to control affective impulses during the evaluation of evidence. Not only may specific learning experiences be developed to aid in

accomplishing this, but stories such as Maureen Daly's "Sixteen"[46] and Michael Fesier's "That's What Happened to Me"[47] might be read and discussed as illustrations of individuals who do and do not face their problem objectively.

Teachers also need to develop better techniques for assessing the quality of an individual's responses to literature. Interpretational ability and reading ability, as measured by the standardized reading test used in this study, seem not to be significantly related. Responses to literature involve a greater range and complexity than are measured in a test confined to measuring literal comprehension. By analyzing individual oral and written comments regarding literary selections, the teacher may obtain some rough indication of the nature of such reactions. Private conferences, possibly occurring while the students are engaged in the process of reading a story and patterned after the reading interviews in this study, may offer a valuable source of data.

The categories used here to analyze responses to literature may prove helpful in determining the instructional levels at which certain literary selections are most appropriately introduced. By studying responses to a selection obtained at diverse instructional levels, researchers may determine the grade or age placement which seems most likely to permit reasonably mature responses and perhaps to identify more carefully the nature of the preparation and classroom instruction which assists readers to respond fully and appropriately to key literary selections.

Finally, the data in this and related studies of response to literature clearly indicate that the curriculum in English should contain a number of literary selections which have many points of contact with readers and are thus accessible to adolescent involvement. In helping readers to cope with such stories and with the complete range of their emotional and intellectual responses, teachers may see that responses involving literary judgments are highlighted, fortified, consolidated, and examined with deep interest. As Louise Rosenblatt has written, "Whatever the specific framework may be [for analyzing a literary work], one requirement seems to be fundamental: the

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[46] Maureen Daly, "Sixteen," in Harvey Nansen (ed.), *O. Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1938* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1938).

[47] Michael Fesier, "That's What Happened to Me," in Edward J. O'Brien (ed.), *Best Short Stories of 1936* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936).

problems should be phrased in terms of the transaction between the reader and the book. The analysis of the 'how' of the book will be a logical outcome of the 'what,' the actual quality of the experience with it. Such understanding of technique and background will not become an end in itself, but will serve to illuminate or organize the pupil's sense of the work as a total experience."[48]

[48]Louise M. Rosenblatt, "The Acid Test for Literature Teaching," *English Journal*, XLV: 2 (February, 1956), 74.

APPENDIX

Sample Transcript of an Adolescent's Response While Reading "Reverdy" by Jessamyn West

Age: 16 years, one month.
School Grade: Tenth.
Intelligence Quotient: 100
Tested Reading: Below Q_1
Parental Occupational Class: V (semiskilled).

Adjectives Checked by Girl on Adjective Check List: Cheerful, distractible, frivolous, sociable.

California Psychological Inventory: Above average on scales for Social Participation, Social Presence, Status, Self-acceptance, Tolerance, Dominance.

Sociometric Data: Chosen by students in a class of 30 for the social qualities and "good ideas."

Observer Comments: Outgoing, talkative, vivacious, generally a frequent contributor to discussion and a leader in group work. Feminine, attractive to the boys in the class.

Biographical Information: An only child, she has been reared by a semi-invalid mother and an uncle. She suffers a slight curvature of the spine—the result of polio. "Engaged" to a boy two years older, she is afraid to tell her mother, who keeps insisting that she go to college. Paula believes she is not "college material." She objected to a unit on family life in English: "I had enough family life at home." "I decided to go to summer school to get away."

Analysis of Responses to the Stories: Paula's responses tend to be characterized by a high degree of self-involvement as is indicated in the following transcripts. She also displays an unusual tendency to visualize events in a story as if watching a play or a motion picture. Like many other adolescent readers, she tends to test the actions of characters against her own experience, and the degree of her self-involvement rises perceptibly when experiences

in literature, as in the following example, suggest problems and events of real life. Like many of the better adolescent readers, she recognizes the need to modify her impressions as new insights are presented by the author.

In Paula's response may be found some of the same characteristics which appear in her classroom behavior. She is warm, sensitive, romantic, and if her own affective desires sometimes lead her to overlook some evidence in a story, they also lead her to vital, enthusiastic response.

Her responses to literature tend to be more sensitive and richer than those of many students whose tested intelligence quotients and tested reading achievements are far higher.

TRANSCRIPT FOR PAULA'S RESPONSE TO "REVERDY"

Division 1:

It's pronounced Reverdy, isn't it?

Q: Uh huh

Well ah . . it kind of . . right off the bat it got my enthusiasm kind of . .

Q: Why?

And ah . . I dunno, just the way the . . author puts the words and everything, something and then . . I was very let down and very disappointed when he said it was her sister . . his sister rather . . I think it's a boy that's s'posed to be saying it. And ah . . she must be quite a girl, the way things go here, and she must be very pretty, for while I was reading her description I kind of pictured her as a very beautiful girl, even as a young aged child. And ah . . but . . kind of older for her age, but in another way, young for her age.

Q: Why do you say that?

Uh . . well, like ah . . the 18-year-old boys coming over and talking to her when she was ah . . twelve or thirteen so she must have been able to talk older, so that older boys would enjoy talking to her. But . . the ah . . yet she'd go out with little . . the little children of her brother's age, or sister's age, or whatever it was, she would be able to play with them and they'd enjoy her. And ah . . . she really must have been a terrific person and I'm just dying of curiosity why he seemed so sad and won't ever say her name [big sigh].

Q: All right, what other reactions do you have to this section?

Well, so far I like it very well . . I think it so far is a pretty good story, and a story I'd enjoy reading more of.

Division 2:

I don't like her mother.

Q: Why?

I don't like her one bit. I think her mother is an . . jealous ah . . ah Reverdy's mother is jealous of her because . . perhaps she's . . her beauty is . . so great and everything. Maybe her mother didn't have boys always over at her house or something, but ah . . to me it just seems like her mother . . it said here that she didn't hate her actually, but I think it was just plain old fashioned jealousy and I feel sorry for the girl for that and her mother thinking she's boy crazy and . . I can kinda see how she'd feel about it when she was perfectly innocent and really wasn't because I have a girl friend myself that was just about in the same predicament. And ah . . I found out here that it was a little sister talking instead of a little brother [laugh].

Q: Practically everybody who has read the story has made the same mistake and thought it was a boy instead of a sister.

But ah . . I dunno . . I'd like to know this girl myself . . this Reverdy.

Q: You'd like her for a friend.

Uh huh. She sounds like a real terrific person, a person I'd like to be more like myself, and ah . . I want to go on to the next part and find out what happened to her.

Division 3:

I found it rather amusing, on her mother's suspicion and then . . the disappointment her mother had. Ah . .

Q: Was that the section in the arbor?

Yes. Ah . . I couldn't help but laugh about it because I could just picture her mother's disappointment when the kids weren't doing something wrong in the arbor, and I think it's very hilarious. Uh . . . I dunno I feel sorry for her though because her mother is that way and I know it can make her very unhappy and ah . . though I think she's

doing a good job of not paying attention to it, and letting it worry her. But I still want to find out what happened to her.

Q: All right, do you have any other feelings about that part?

Well, I still admire her greatly, and ah . . . I dunno it's just . . she's the kind of a person I'd really like to know and have a good friend.

Division 4:

I even like the mother less now . . I think she's an old hag.

Q: Why?

Oh she's making Reverdy walk out there in that . . the . . out in the yard. As a matter of fact I think the mother is a little bit teched . . and then, here at the end . . now I'm positive that she's jealous of Reverdy because of the last here she says Mother's only little dear girl who's never given her a moment of trouble . . the little homely girl with the glasses and so now I even feel more strongly that the mother is jealous of Reverdy and ah . . I dunno . . it's sort of bewildering, this story in a way. You don't . . some things you don't know what to think about 'em, and other things you have definite feelings.

Q: What did you have in mind there?

Well . . ah . . I like Reverdy and all that but I wonder if she could be doing things that were you know . . being a bad girl, not necessarily with boys or anything like that but just doing things that irritate her mother. Besides her mother being jealous . . I do think her mother's jealous of the girl.

Q: So you think she was right about Reverdy.

Uh huh . . if she does little things to be bad and not trying . . I wonder . . I don't think she does, but still I kind of, you know, that little suspicion. And ah. . . I dunno, all through the story the way the author has written it, you feel more or less as if, you're the little girl. Ah . . from ah . . her point of view, you kind of feel as though you're her and that's the way she does. And ah . . I like the way the author wrote it very well I think it's very interesting.

Q: What other observations do you have to make about that part?

Uh . . oh dear. . . uh . . I think it's a very true to life story myself . . ah . . some parts of it because ah . . a lot of mothers are jealous, or I have seen mothers who were jealous of their daughters that were

more beautiful than they are, but I don't think there are many of them. I think there are very few . . . I think more mothers will ah . . be proud of their daughter if their daughter's more beautiful, they feel proud, or happy for them.

Division 5:

Well, I was quite surprised a couple of times, them using the word, hell. In the story . . it kind of . . it . . you know, comes as a sudden shock coming out of a school story . . that you read at school. Ah . .

Q: You think it should be an outside-of-school story?

Yes, in a way. But ah . . oh, I think the mother's an old hag [laugh]. But she . . I dunno, I don't think it's fair, the way she treats Reverdy, as a matter of fact, I don't think it's fair the way she treats anybody. It sounds to me like she's got everybody in the family all henpecked and ah . . more or less, you do things the way I want you to do, or I'll drive you crazy nagging at you, or sump'n/ And ah . . the way she's got the father . . and she goes in and talks to him and then he goes out and . . it kinda gives the impression that he gives Reverdy heck too. And ah . . even though in a way it seems as if he doesn't want to. And ah . . I dunno . . I don't understand this mother, and why she is the way she is. I think she's got a mere grudge against life or something . . And ah . . I don't think this'll work back here where Clare is . . and her little brother Chummie start playing, I think the mother's just in a mere bad mood and nothing can make her happy . . in fact I think she's ina . . isn't the word, habitual . . bad mood. Right word? And ah . . and I just don't like her at all. I don't think it'll work though, about those two kids playing and trying to make the mother happy . . . I think it's an impossibility.

Q: Oh.

Division 6:

I'm sad.

Q: Why?

Oh, it's just . . I dunno . . it's . . oh, it's a terrific story, but the way it ends it is just . . the next morning the little girl wakes up and . . and ah . . there was the flowers there . . the asters and they'd grown fresh over night and Reverdy was gone and ah . . I dunno.

In a way though it kinda gives you an impression . . . it makes you wonder where the poor kid went but I guess she just couldn't stand her parents giving her heck all the time and bellyachin' and nagging at her and ah . . at least that's the impression I got from the story and I think it's a . . well, I dunno, I think it's a true to life story. I think there have been a lot of experiences like that, in a way . . a parent . . . most parents are more loving and everything but there always are the ones that have to be different and difficult and ah . . the poor kid, I just think her mother's a little bit off in her head myself because the way she acted toward the children and ah . . I thought it was awful sad though where Reverdy thought that her little sister Clare was playing for her, but she really wasn't . . she was playing for her mother and ah . .

Q: What are your feelings about that other than sadness?

I dunno . . I could just see the ah . . kinda feel the very same feeling that Clare would have you know, when her sister was thanking her for that . . she'd feel kinda like a heel in a way and ah . . though her sister . . her older sister appreciated it, but yet her mother didn't and ah . . oh, I dunno, I think it's . . I think it's a wonderful story.

Q: Do you have any other feelings or reactions . . .?

Well, right now I . . I can't think of any but ah . . I . . I've never read a story like it and I think the schools should have more stories like this 'cause I think it would help a lot, because some kids do have problems like this, in their homes.

DIRECTED CUMULATIVE RESPONSE (not coded)

Q: What do you think this story is about?

Well . . I think it's about a young girl . . a teenage girl . . it kind of bewildered me though about whether she was actually an older teenager about 18 or so or a younger one, about my age . . 15 or 16. I didn't quite understand it but . . ah . . anyway, it's about the girl Reverdy and her younger sister who is telling the story from her point of view I think and ah . . Reverdy is beautiful and has looks which her younger and I don't think her mother have, and ah . . a great personality that people just naturally go for and ah in the family I think there's a lot of jealousy and ah .. ah .. no warmth and loving and . . I think any family, in order to be a happy family, needs that

definitely and ah .. the young girl is being criticized by her mother and her .. for the boys liking her and all of them flocking around her all the time and .. actually her mother refuses, I think, to understand .. doesn't want to understand and just thinks that her daughter is boy crazy and probably calls her names like Chippy and stuff like that and here she is just a sweet girl trying to be a good girl. And ah .. I think it's a very warm story and a story with .. not much understanding on the other parts of the family .. the other members of the family.

SUMMARY OF CODING OF THIS TRANSCRIPT

Literary Judgments	21
Interpretational Responses	59
Narrational Responses	11
Associational Responses	9
Self-involvements	42
Prescriptive Judgments	0
Miscellaneous	0

SOME FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

Readers respond to literature in unique and selective ways. . . . General or universal group tendencies are clearly demonstrated in the development of interpretational, literary judgment, self-involvement, and narrational scores. . . . An individual's reactions are conditioned by the dynamic interplay of a constellation of factors rather than by single causes.

Readers who become extensively involved in stories are also inclined to evaluate the literary qualities of a selection. The quality of individual interpretations is generally unrelated to the intelligence and reading ability of the subjects.

Ratings on a standardized reading test do not offer a reliable index of the ability of readers to interpret literary selections.

Adolescent readers need assistance in learning to interpret literature. Misinterpretations arising during reading affect the reader's cumulative judgment of a story.

Teachers must exercise discretion in recommending to adolescents specific books as an aid to solving their personal problems. An adolescent's reaction to literature which involves problems similar to his own cannot be predicted with certainty.

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